Polyhedron®

NEWSZINE

JUNE

84

RPGA® NETWORK

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Take A Byte

War Games With A Role Playing Flavor (And Vice Versa)

by Erlene Mooney

S.S.I.'s success with its role playing computer adventures has led the S.S.I. designers to add role playing elements to strategic and historical games.

Conversely, an upcoming D&D® computer game will have strategic and war gaming components.

James Young, S.S.I. associate producer in charge of war games, said many computer war games already appeal to role players. However, by making some additions to the games, they will invite more people to give them a try.

"The war game market is older. It's a smaller market. The average age of the gamers is 26- to 30-years-old."

The company's sales of war games is also much lower than role playing computer game sales, he said.

A few of the games already have a role playing element in that the player assumes the part of a general or the president of the United States, Young explained.

"Now we're looking at games that let you have parties of men so you can watch them progress throughout the war—that will let us start making war games with role playing aspects." It will be similar to watching a party of adventurers progress in a fantasy role playing game, he added.

Currently, most computer war games are complicated and ponderous, Young said. Although they are also interesting and engaging, they tend to be too rules-intensive to attract new players.

S.S.I. is trying to simplify some of the war games in production. For example, Young said three on the company's schedule should be easier to play, more user-friendly, and contain some role playing elements. These games are: Clash of Steel, War In Russia, and Tank Warfare.

Clash of Steel, set for release in June or July, covers all of World War Two in Europe. Young explained it is a massive undertaking. "This is a pretty game," Young said. "The graphics are good, attractive." Although it is a historical game, it can have different outcomes, and the player can choose short or long versions. The game is being designed by Martin Scholz, a programmer who lives in Germany.

War In Russia covers the action from 1941 to 1945. It is a Russian Front strategic game that should be on the shelves in late summer. Gary Grigsby is designing this game. His other noted accomplishments include "Carrier Strike, South Pacific 1942-44," and "Pacific War, Strategic Combat On A Massive Scale!"

Tank Warfare covers 1918 through 1992, and is also set for a late summer release. "This will be a very large game," Young said, adding that players will have access to a huge data base with a variety of war vehicles.

Young started work at S.S.I. in 1989 as a playtester. He later moved into the product support division that handles consumer questions, and then transferred to research and development.

"They assign war games to me because most of the people here have role playing backgrounds and I enjoy war games," Young said. For example, he plays "World in Flames, Advanced Squad Leader," and Ancients and Civil War miniatures.

He also tries his hand at role playing, becoming involved in a local DARK SUN™ game.

Young oversaw the Ultimate Adventures S.S.I. release, where gamers create their own role playing quests.

Ultimate Adventures includes about 120 monsters and NPCs. Young said it allows people to print out dungeon maps and adventures and to pass that material along on a disk to other people who have Ultimate Adventures.

Additional role playing aids compatible with Ultimate Adventures might be produced, he added. Possibilities include adding DRAGONLANCE® game monsters and Oriental Adventures characters and creatures.

The D&D Computer Game

Late this summer S.S.I. will release its first computer game set in the Known World of the D&D game.

Associate Producer Rick White explained it is a strategy game where the computer serves as the moderator or DM™. It is the first such game undertaken by the company, White said, adding he hopes there will be more. The computer interacts with the player depending on the player's actions.

The image of the DM is shown as a face at the top of the screen. The DM™ follows the movements of the computer's mouse, White said, and if the player does nothing, the DM falls asleep. He also grimaces when the player does something foolish.

White said D&D game players will recognize the lands described in the various Gazetteers and many of the NPCs found in them.

"It will have a war game feel," White said, adding most war gamers and role playing gamers should enjoy it. "However, hard-core war gamers probably won't like it because it's too simple," he added.

The game presents overhead views of the land and castles, allowing the player to place fighters and develop schemes of world conquest.

"You will be able to play the hero," White said, explaining a lot of animation sequences are devoted to the heroes. As the player conquers towns, he can send men away to be trained. They increase in abilities.

Next issue White will provide more information about the upcoming game, including tips for playing and clues.

Easy Contest

We'd like to know what you think about computer gaming and what topics you'd like to see covered in this column. Do you only play computer role playing games? War games? Or do you play strictly on-line adventures or tabletop games face-to-face?

Send your answers on a postcard to:
Computer Game Survey,
RPGA® Network
P.O. Box 515
Lake Geneva, WI 53147

Cards must be mailed by July 30. We will randomly draw one dozen winning cards from those received by that date. Six winners will receive a S.S.I. IBM computer game, and six will receive one-year extensions to their RPGA Network memberships.

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A day or night spent with a guide from Traagor's tours might lead a character to do some very strange things. Art by Kevin Ward.

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Notes From HQ

Tournaments And Points

The Network sponsors tournaments at conventions around the world and over computer bulletin boards on the GEnie and America On Line systems.

We pride ourselves on these tournaments because they let members enjoy quality gaming in the company of other members.

Gaining Points

Network members only receive points for tournaments that are sanctioned, *i.e. approved* by the Network. We do not hand out points for non-sanctioned events. Sometimes we award participation points for war games or miniature events, depending on the convention.

Make sure when you attend a convention that you are participating in a *sanctioned* tournament—if you are looking for tournaments that will add to your Player and Judge levels.

A good way to start is to consult the convention's program. Tournaments usually state they are sponsored by the Network or sanctioned by the Network. If you have any doubts, ask a convention worker.

For example, the GEN CON® Game Fair and the Network's own WINTER FANTASY™ Convention clearly state which events are Network-sanctioned.

If you are planning to attend a convention and want to know ahead of time what sanctioned events will be there, send us a *letter* and enclose a Self Addressed Stamped Envelope. We will tell you what tournaments are playing. That way, you won't spend money and vacation time only to be disappointed that you already played in the events at a different convention (though you could volunteer to judge these events).

Listing Events On-Line

HQ soon will begin maintaining an index of upcoming conventions in the TSR roundtable area on the GEnie system. (Log on to GEnie, type "TSR," select option 1; and read category 27, topic 9.) This will include the titles, and game systems, of all Network tournaments that will be sanctioned at each convention.

Caveat Emptor

Occasionally a convention will run an event and claim it is Network sanctioned when it isn't.

For example, Club Con held in Ohio on February 7th ran a Living City event, *False Prophesy,* that had not yet been approved. HQ sent the convention a sanctioned Living City tournament, but *False Prophesy* was run instead. An individual associated with the convention was notified that this new event was not yet sanctioned (because we had not yet read it) and that no points would be awarded for it.

However, the convention ran it anyway and did not notify the players it was not a sanctioned event.

Unfortunately, that means those Network members who played *False Prophesy* at Club Con will not receive Network points. Neither will the experience points and items their characters earned count. This statement serves as a notice to those players.

False Prophesy will run at Origins and other conventions as a sanctioned tournament. Do not be afraid to play in this event—it is a fine Living City tournament by an author we hope to see more events from. It simply was not yet sanctioned by the time of Club Con.

A second non-sanctioned tournament for the TOP SECRET/S.I.™ game under the guise of a team event was held at Total Confusion, February 26-28th, in Massachusetts. Participants in that event will not receive points. This tournament was only an outline. We liked the outline, but could not agree to sanction the event until a full-blown tournament was written.

Why Are We So Fussy?

The international ranking system of Players and Judges means nothing if a convention can run any tournament and label it Network sanctioned.

For a tournament to be sanctioned by us, it must be reviewed by us and meet our Code of Ethics, which is detailed on the Standard Disclosure Form in this issue. It must be complete, balanced, and enjoyable to play. It must be long enough to fill out a four-hour tournament round, and it must feature workable characters. It must be designed so any player sitting down at a table has a chance of winning under the Network's voting system.

The Network's membership is diverse, and a sanctioned event must be written so all members, young and old, can appreciate it.

Network-approved tournaments are challenging and test the participants' role playing and problem solving abilities.

A tournament can be sanctioned and points awarded for participation in it only when the scenario meets all these criteria. If this weren't the case, there would be no equity in the point system.

Tournaments running at local conventions that do not carry Network sanctioning might be fine events. We're not discouraging you from playing in them. Far from it—if an event looks like fun, sign up!

For the most part, conventions are honest about which events are sanctioned tournaments. Exceptions are uncommon, and we note them in the POLYHEDRON® Newszine so participants will be alerted that they are not receiving points.

Sometimes conventions will add to their schedule at the last minute other tournaments (which are in our sanctioned pool) to pad out their convention offerings. Conventions have access to these tournaments through game masters who have copies of these events. Doing this only causes problems for us because we pay attention to which tournaments we send to various parts of a country. We might have set aside one of those "add-on" tournaments for a convention running nearby in a later month. By padding out one convention's offerings without notifying us, another convention has been hurt.

Convention coordinators need to work with us to keep our tournament program the best in the world.

Take Care,

Jean

Letters

Good Groups, Unfriendly Gamers, And Service Points

I've taken advantage of your classifieds section to write to many pen pals around the world. I call it "Gaming for Peace and Understanding." I encourage other gamers to learn about a culture by writing to someone in a foreign land. As gamers we never run out of things to say, and even the weather is a good topic of conversation. Lasting friendships start with a single letter. Try it.

For clubs, why not "adopt" a group in another country? Quite by accident, our Network club discovered a gaming group at the university in Moscow, Russia. It was very hard for the Russian students to find rule books or modules for their games. They had simply heard about role playing and seen it a few times. Most of their rules were developed by the group, since they didn't have access to publications from the United States.

After hearing how hard they were working to become role players, our club, ARGH (Association of Role playing Gamers of Houston), decided to help them. We collected books, modules, and other items. Houston gamers were wonderfully generous. In fact, the care packages were so big the postage bill was $35. But it was worth it. The gamers in Moscow were overjoyed. We continue to correspond and exchange ideas with them. Peace through war gaming—what a concept.

I'm sure there are other groups out there with the same problem, but no way to contact those who'd be willing to help. Any suggestions? We were lucky to find our Moscow gamers. Closer to home, there may be inner city groups at community centers looking for materials. (Gaming groups instead of gangs?) RPGA® Network members could locate center organizers and offer support. It would be one more way to get involved in a worthwhile project, get some positive media coverage and promote our hobby.

I encourage all RPGA Network members and their gaming friends to remember the importance of a positive image when at conventions. I hate to be forced to admit that some gamers vandalize hotel rooms, act aggressively toward other hotel guests, or just plainly have no manners in public. I know it's just a few "bad apples," but it makes it so difficult for the rest of us. Please bring your good sense and dignity to conventions along with your enthusiasm for gaming.

Helen E. Peters
Houston, TX

Helen, your experiences with the Moscow gaming group sound wonderful. Perhaps there are other clubs out there that have had similar experiences. Or, perhaps members of international clubs reading this would like to become involved in something similar. We'd like to hear from you.

Clubs hoping to adopt a sister organization in another country should consider using our Classified Ad section. There is no charge for classifieds.

Why I Didn't Go To The Game Fair

As I was filling out my pre-registration form for the 1992 GEN CON®/ORIGINS Game Fair, my life as a fan of role playing games flashed before my eyes. Although my interest in RPGs dates back almost a decade, it seems I'll be forever a novice.

I remember the time back in 1984 when I managed to sneak into an adventure. The local gaming group was usually more reserved and exclusive than any secret society, but security wasn't as tight as usual that day. A classmate sneaked a peek at one of the books and started asking questions. All I had to do was keep my ears open and my mouth shut. Once they knew that I knew "too much," they had to let me in.

Luckily, the guys took kindly to me, and the few times I was in the game they played easy, low-level adventures. But, as old high school chums go, they promised to keep in touch but never did.

College was rough on my new-found hobby. The only bunch of eager rookie gamers I met couldn't play either, for lack of a GM. The only other time I heard anything about role playing was when someone announced plans for "The First RPG Convention in Puerto Rico." It never happened, of course.

Eventually, I changed schools to be closer to home. That's when I met **them.** A "friend" of mine had invited me to play a science fiction game I'd never tried before and gave me a pre-rolled character—a very high-ranking officer (mistake #1). Naturally, I fouled up ("Couldn't we just assume that my character knows that, even if I don't?"). They didn't ask me back, but they kept the character in the campaign for a good laugh every once in a while.

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Then my "friend" wanted me to try one of the new fantasy game worlds. I guess I had this coming, since I fell for it again. This time I brought in my own character (mistake #2). They got me with the old "hallway-with-magic-paintings-on-the-walls-trick. I'm sure all of you must have been there at some point in your role playing careers. It took me about an hour and three Intelligence checks to figure it out, while everyone around me died laughing. As usual, I haven't heard from them since. But they kept my character, I'm sure.

As far as I know there are no other players here, so I have become a collector of boxed sets and rulebooks of any fantasy and horror game available.

The pre-registration brochure is still in the same drawer it's been in since it arrived in the mail. I never finished filling out the form.

Flora Sanchez
Caguas, Puerto Rico

Unfortunately for our hobby, the ability to show new gamers a good time and make them feel welcome is a skill that takes some time and effort to learn; not every gamer has it.

Considering that you've already created a few characters and have read the rules for the games that interest you, don't give up on gaming—or the Game Fair. The convention is one of the most worthwhile gaming experiences you will ever have. There are games for beginners to experts, and there are a plethora of Network events where the other players will make you feel at home. If you still feel nervous about your lack of experience, tell the people in charge of your Network event that you are a beginner and that you'd like to be assigned to a table with a DM™ that can help teach you how to play.

In the meantime, there are many ways to locate good gaming groups—people who welcome newcomers and who don't mind if the newcomers are unfamiliar with the game. Consider running another Classified Ad here in the Newszine (we notice that you already have run three, in issues #73, #74, and #75). The ads are free, and there are gamers out there.

Next, consider putting up a notice in a local hobby shop stating you are looking for a game. Ask the hobby shop or book store owner if he or she knows of a local gaming group. That's how some members of the Network staff met their first gaming friends.

Consider play-by-mail games. We featured an article on this genre in issue #83. In addition, there is a Network club based on play-by-mail gaming, Dragonslayers Unlimited, c/o Jil Conway, Rt 6, 3001 Johnson Lane, Columbia, MO 65202-8510.

Service Points

We have Player, Judge, and Service Points. I understand how one gains Player and Judge Points, but I would like to know how and where Service Points are earned.

My interest in Service Points is due to the small chance I feel I have to earn Judge and Player points. I have played and judged games at conventions before, and as a role player, I feel that there is not enough time to truly role play a character. Also, I've noticed that one of two things tends to happen during games: either the people seated closer to the judge gain the lion's share of her or his attention, or the judge finds a single dominant (and not necessarily skilled) player to control the play. From a judge's point of view, I've found that I am unable to judge the role playing ability of the players; only their knowledge of game mechanics, recognition of them due to loudness or persistence, or their ability to react in a given situation in the limited period of time allotted.

If there are judges and players out there who can assist me with these problems, I would certainly like to hear from them.

Frank Cabanas
Mullica Hill, NJ

Service Points are earned by doing a service to the Network. For example, the marshals and HQ volunteers at the Game Fair earn Service Points. Tournament authors earn Service Points. Gamers also earn Service Points by planning charity game activities, holding conventions, participating in membership drives, and attending seminars.

The membership card you receive each year simply lists your total points as a player or judge. However, the slip of paper your card comes on (and that so many people throw away) details what points are Service Points and what points were earned as a player or judge by participating in tournaments.

Often regional directors and club presidents submit lists of members and their accomplishments so we can record service points.

In addition, members who believe they have contributed to conventions and other Network gaming activities should write us brief letters listing what they have done that merits Service Points.

Newszine Review

I am writing this letter to answer your request for comments on what the membership likes and dislikes about the POLYHEDRON® Newszine. The following list contains the articles and columns which I really enjoy:

1. The Living City; 2. The Everwinking Eye; 3. Into The Dark; 4. Notes From HQ; 5. Printing of modules (featured adventures); 6. The monster, treasure, and magic item contest winners and various articles; 7. Product previews; 8. Convention previews and descriptions; 9. Classified Ads.

I do not, however, like all of the articles and features that are printed in the Newszine. These are items which I would prefer to see reduced or eliminated:

1. Letters to the Editor (reduced); 2. Bloodmoose and Company (only if it can be replaced with a higher quality cartoon); 3. Conventions (this seems to be fully covered in DRAGON® Magazine; 4. The Living Galaxy.

Areas in which I would like to see an expanded number of articles include the MARVEL SUPER HEROES game; the area of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting outside, but in the vicinity of Ravens Bluff, (The Living Wilderness?); higher quality photographs used for the convention collages; POLYHEDRON Newszine staff profiles; and any articles for the SPELLJAMMER® setting and RAVENLOFT® campaign.

I also wanted to say thank you to one of your staff members, but I have forgotten who was kind enough to help me. When I wrote to correct my ad looking for a gaming group in the L.A. area, a male Newszine employee called me at work to clarify the ad and make sure it was correctly placed. That was above and beyond the call of duty.

Gregor Bond
Los Angeles, CA

Reader reaction has a direct impact on the content of the Newszine, Gregor. For example, several readers requested articles on game designers and authors. We featured Bob Salvatore last issue, and this issue contains an interview with Star Trek author Gene DeWeese. ❑

The New Rogues Gallery

Lord Speaker Mellisa Eldaren

by James Alan

At a contest held at the Network's WINTER FANTASY™ Convention, James Alan of Ohio won the title of Lord Speaker of the Ravens Bluff Advisory Council for his Living City character Mellisa Eldaren.

Mellisa Eldaren

7th Level Female Human Druid

STR: 9
INT: 9
WIS: 18
DEX: 18
CON: 16
CHA: 18
COM: 15
AC Normal: −2
AC Rear: 2
Hit Points: 50
Alignment: Neutral
Languages: Common, Dwarvish, Elvish, Gnomish, Green Dragon, Halfling, Treant
THAC0: 16

Age: 22
Height: 5′ 8″
Weight: 114 lbs.
Hair/Eyes: Red/Green

Weapon Proficiencies: Scimitar
Spells/day: 5 5 3 2

Mellisa has major access to the spheres of All, Animal, Elemental, Healing, Plant, and Weather, and minor access to the Divination sphere.

Mellisa is an attractive woman, and her waist-length hair and sparkling, emerald eyes make her stand out in a crowd. Her fair skin smells faintly of rose petals, and her gentle smile hints at a sense of humor. The druidess usually wears embroidered robes and sandals.

Never without her scimitar, Mellisa travels the streets of The Living City in the company of one of her raven friends. She is admired by many of the town's young women, who seek to copy her hairstyle and clothing.

Mellisa's life was not always tied to the city, however. She was born 22 winters ago in a wooded area north of Sevencho, cradled at the foot of the Earthfast Mountains. She was only a year old when a raiding party of orcs killed her parents. The orcs abducted her and headed toward their home. However, before the attackers got far, they were set upon by elf warriors

The baby girl was taken to the elves' community and placed in the care of an elven woman, Tianna Eldaren. Tianna gave Mellisa her name, as the elves had no idea what the girl was called.

The years passed, and Mellisa grew quickly. She wasn't always accepted by the elven children, many of whom considered her different and inferior.

During her youth she sought the companionship of animals; they accepted her, not caring that she was human. Mellisa discovered she had a rapport with creatures, and she learned to communicate with them through simple gestures and facial expressions. She also learned to care for plants and knew every variety of bush, flower, and tree in and around the elven community. She nurtured injured plants, helped seedling trees to grow strong, and gained the respect of the oldest elves who were glad she protected the forest.

Mellisa befriended the treants who lived in the valley. They let her rest under their shady branches.

On her 12th birthday, the elven council convened and decided the girl needed to be with her own kind. Mellisa and her elven parent, Tianna, were sad, but they knew it was for the best.

Tianna whisked the girl away on the back of a griffon, taking her to a small cabin on the outskirts of a village. The old man who lived there quickly took Mellisa into his care. The man was Tallwin Cromwell, a druid and servant of Silvanus.

During the next seven years, Tallwin taught Mellisa more about the woods and creatures than the girl dreamed possible. And each day her faith in Silvanus grew.

Mellisa felt at home in the forest, and soon became a skilled druidess. However, she was curious about civilization.

Finding work with a caravan, Mellisa, now 19, headed to Tantras. She eventually found work with another caravan headed south to Ravens Bluff, a city she now calls home.

Mellisa considers The Living City exciting and fun. She can be encountered anywhere in the city, talking to citizens, squawking with the ravens, and exploring the alleys.

Her current plans include building a grove to Silvanus near the city. She works on this when she is not busy with her duties as Lord Speaker of the Advisory Council. She was recently named to the position by Lord Mayor Charles Oliver O'Kane. Mellisa has vowed to serve the mayor and the city to the best of her abilities.

Although she has been accepted well by the majority of residents, Lord Charles Frederick Laverne Blacktree IV and his followers publicly criticize her. Lord Charles, the former Lord Speaker of the Advisory Council, emphasizes that a person with a neutral outlook on life cannot adequately serve the city, and that she is liable to go for a stroll one day in the woods and forget to come back to work. Further, Lord Charles has alleged that Mellisa is keeping unlicensed creatures and monsters in the city, and he is demanding an investigation. His supporters also question a recent land purchase Mellisa made; Lord Charles contends the ground actually was intended for a hospital. ❑

The Living City

The Bandaged Wound

by Steven Kydd

The Bandaged Wound is a fairly new, two-story, wooden structure nestled in a small corner of Ravens Bluff's Uptown section. The first floor is a single large room littered with many cots. Shelves along the walls are cluttered with surgical instruments, bandages, pestles and mortars, and hundreds of potion bottles. Many of these bottles contain normal herbs and other simple medicines, while others contain magical healing potions. The second floor accomodates living areas and a small room which is filled with many more potions and magical scrolls. The door to this room is always *wizard locked.*

A small wooden sign hangs outside the shop; it reads "The Bandaged Wound" in large red letters on a white background. The door below this sign is always open. It does not even have a lock. Day or night, someone is always awake inside, ready to help anyone who enters the building.

The Bandaged Wound is open to all races and religions, good or evil. Help is offered openly, and those who cannot afford the prices are aided regardless, with payment discussed afterward. Magical potions and scrolls also can be purchased here at reasonably low prices. Even though the majority of people helped are simple drunks injured in fights and members of the city watch, adventurers also use the place.

The Bandaged Wound has gained quite a reputation due to its excellent facilities and low prices. Here is a list of spells commonly used on anyone who ventures through the door.

Spell	Cost
Cure Disease	350 gp
Cure Blindness	350 gp
Cure Light Wounds	5 gp/hp
Cure Serious Wounds	10 gp/hp
Cure Critical Wounds	20 gp/hp
Any Detection Spell	75 gp
Neutralize Poison	50 gp

The Bandaged Wound also sells the following potions and scrolls:

Item	Cost
Elixir of Health	300 gp
Potion of Extra-Healing	350 gp
Potion of Healing	150 gp
Scroll, Cure Light Wounds	500 gp
Scroll, Cure Serious Wounds	600 gp
Scroll, Cure Critical Wounds	800 gp
Scroll, Neutralize Poison,	350 gp

Adventurers who need to fulfill payments to The Bandaged Wound sometimes are hired to find rare plants used in healing poultices and potions.

The Bandaged Wound has three proprietors. They share a common desire to help all who are in need.

Tiran Laventhos

13th Level Male Human Mage

STR: 9
INT: 18
WIS: 17
DEX: 13
CON: 15
CHA: 12
AC Normal: −3
AC Rear: −2
Hit Points: 34
Alignment: Lawful Good
Languages: Common, Storm Giant, Orcish, Kobold, Elvish, Dwarven, Thorass
THAC0: 16

Age: 34
Height: 5′ 10″
Weight: 135 lbs.
Hair/Eyes: Black/Brown

Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger, staff
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Healing (15), herbalism (16), spellcraft (16), read/write Common (19)
Magic Items: *Dagger +1, dagger +3, bracers of defense AC 2, cloak of protection +4*
Spells/Day: 5 5 5 4 4 2

Spell Books:

Level One: *Affect normal fires, cantrip, charm person, color spray, detect magic, magic missile, read magic, shocking grasp;* Level Two: *Alter self, flaming sphere, invisibility, knock, ray of enfeeblement, summon swarm, web, wizard lock;* Level Three: *Fireball, flame arrow, dispel magic, hold person, vampiric touch;* Level Four: *Fear, stone skin, wall of force;* Level Five: *Cone of cold, pass wall, teleport, wall of iron;* Level Six: *Anti-magic shell, globe of invulnerability*

Tiran is young looking. He is thin and not very muscular, but this is hidden by the long flowing white robes he wears. He usually dons soft leather boots on days he will leave the shop. He has high, thin cheeks, and his nose has a slight upward turn.

Tiran was born and raised in Zhentil Keep, as the son of a city watch captain. He had one brother, Chiron. Growing up surrounded by death and despair, Tiran and his brother decided that when they grew older they would do everything in their power to aid those who needed help. When their father was killed by an angry mob, their mother left Zhentil Keep for a better life, abandoning the children. At the time, both children were 12 years old. The children quickly decided it was best to leave Zhentil Keep, too.

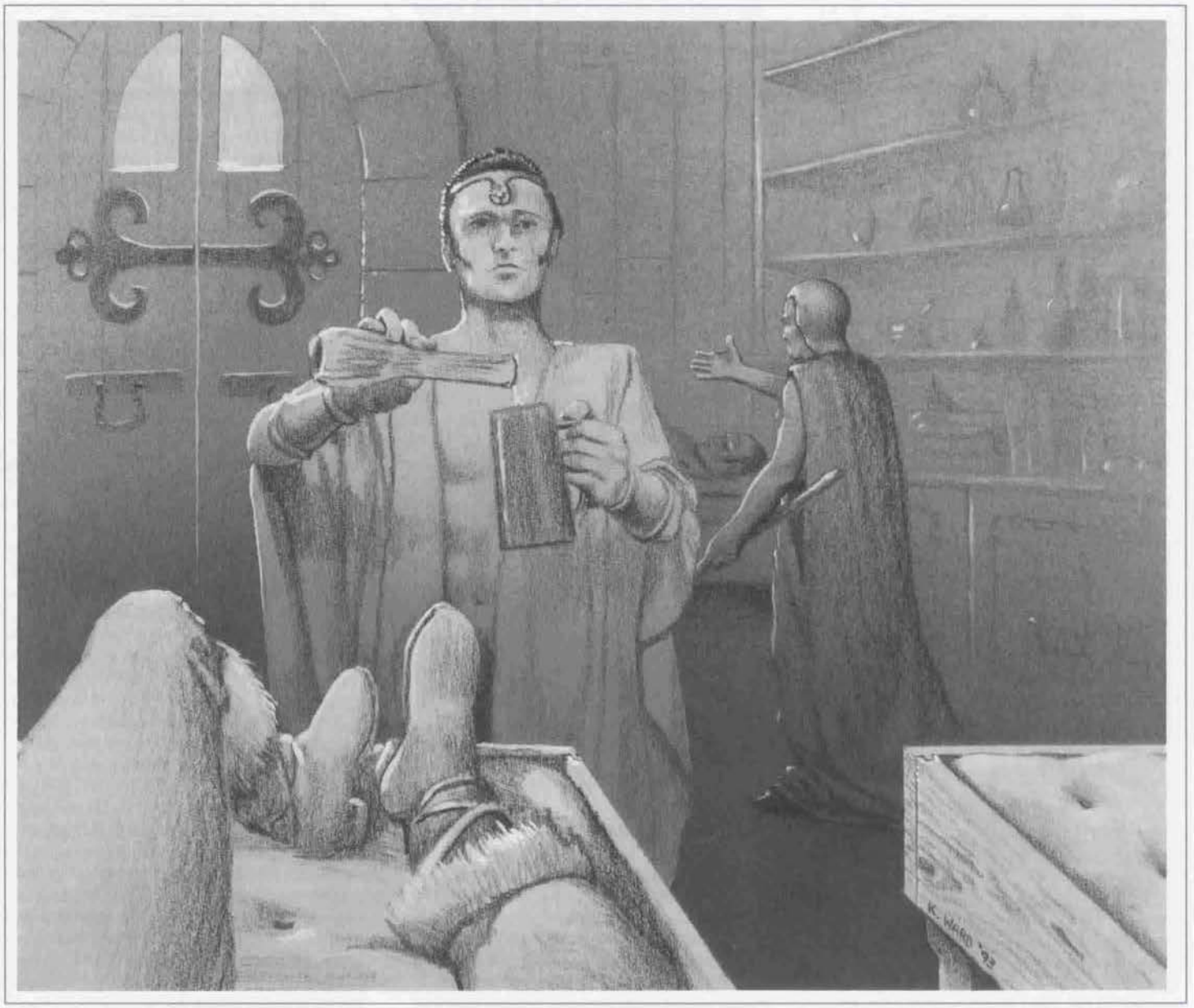
They traveled south to Scardale, where they lived for several years. Tiran sought the path of the mage, while his brother chose to learn the ways of Mystra. After adventuring together for many years, they used the money they earned to travel to the Living City to set up a small infirmary for adventurers. There they met Tarron Crystalmere, an elven cleric who shares their beliefs.

Chiron Laventhos

10th Level Human Male Priest of Mystra

STR: 13
INT: 16
WIS: 18
DEX: 15
CON: 13
CHA: 13
AC Normal: 8
AC Rear: 10
Hit Points: 45
Alignment: Lawful Good
Languages: Common, Elvish, Dwarven, Goblin, Gold Dragon, Thorass
THAC0: 14

Age: 34
Height: 6′ 2″



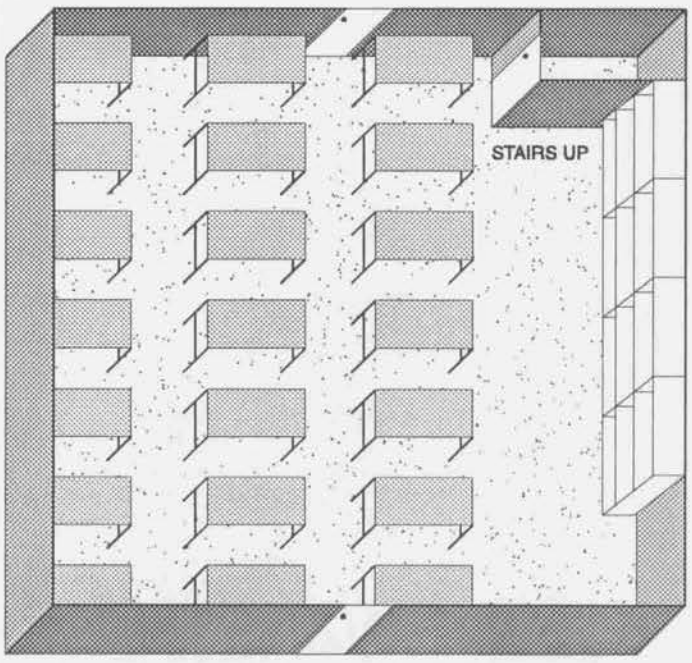
Weight: 220 lbs.
Hair/Eyes: Black/Brown

Weapon Proficiencies: Mace, war hammer
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Healing (16), herbalism (14), spellcraft (14)
Magic Items: *Mace of disruption, war hammer +1/+3 vs. chaotic creatures*
Spells/Day: 6 6 4 4 2

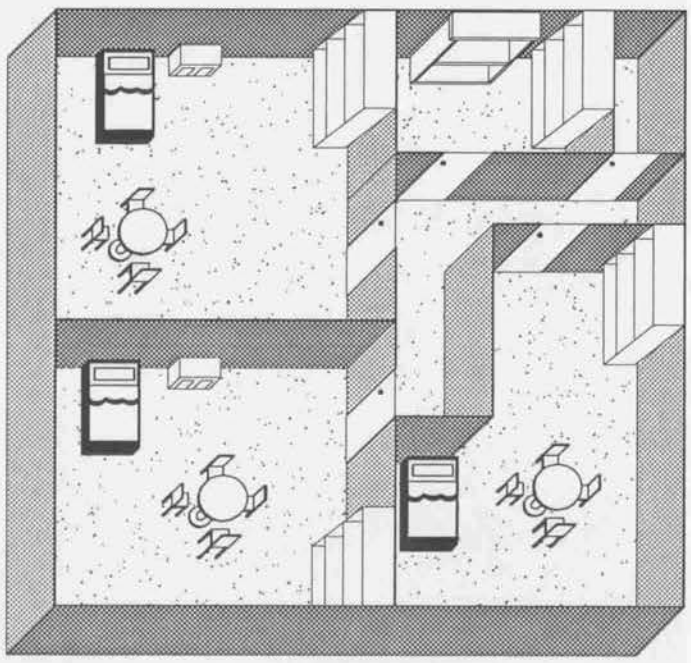
As a priest of Mystra, Chiron receives a +2 bonus to all saves vs. any kind of magic. He can function normally in wild magic and magic dead areas, can cast *detect magic* once a day, and turn undead as a 10th level cleric. Chiron has major access to the spheres of All, Astral, Charm, Combat, Creation, Divination, Elemental, Guardian, Healing, Necromantic, Protection, and Summoning. He has minor access to the spheres of Animal, Plant, Sun, and Weather.

Chiron is the same age as his brother, but that is where the resemblance ends. Chiron has a better build than Tiran, and he chooses to wear long blue robes with a soft blue skull cap. His face is slightly rounded with a long hawk-like nose.

When Chiron and Tiran reached Scardale, the boys went their own ways. Chiron devoted all his time to understanding his goddess. He has achieved great fame in the Scardale region for his compassion, and he offers help freely, even if there is nothing to gain for himself. Chiron took the death of his father harder than Tiran because Chiron did not fully understand that it was not the mob that was to blame, but his father's corruptness. Because of this, Chiron will risk his life for anyone, simply because he never wants to stand by helpless as those around him die.



GROUND FLOOR



UPPER FLOOR

THE BANDAGED WOUND

Tarron Crystalmere

9th Level Elven Male Cleric of Mystra

STR: 11
INT: 17
WIS: 18
DEX: 17
CON: 9
CHA: 15
AC Normal: 6
AC Rear: 10
Hit Points: 40
Alignment: Lawful Good
Languages: Common, Elvish, Dwarven, Orcish
THAC0: 16

Age: 137
Height: 6′ 4″
Weight: 175 lbs.
Hair/Eyes: Silver-white/Green

Weapon Proficiencies: Mace, flail
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Healing (16), herbalism (15), spellcraft (15), navigation (15)
Magic Items: *Flail +2, scroll (heal, resurrection, cure critical wounds* (×2))
Spells/Day: 6 6 4 3 1

As a priest of Mystra, Tarron receives a +2 bonus to saves vs. any kind of magic. He can function normally in wild magic and magic dead areas, he can cast *detect magic* once a day, and turn undead as a 9th level cleric. Tarron has major access to the spheres of All, Astral, Charm, Combat, Creation, Divination, Elemental, Guardian, Healing, Necromantic, Protection, and Summoning. He has minor access to the spheres of Animal, Plant, Sun, and Weather.

The tall, thin Tarron is extremely polite, and this is accentuated by his warm, kind face. He wears the common blue robes of Mystra, but prefers not to wear a head piece.

Born and raised on Evermeet, Tarron had very little contact with the outside world. However, he heard tales of Faerun and found them both amazing and mesmerizing. Unable to contain his curiosity and thirst for adventure, Tarron stowed away on an elven vessel bound for Waterdeep, and soon found himself in the world of his dreams. He lived in Waterdeep for five years, serving as an apprentice at a temple of Mystra. After a while, wanderlust took over again, and Tarron decided to travel to the Moonshae Isles. Living there for a few years, he became involved in the Darkwalker War. During this time he witnessed horrible deaths by sword, plague, and fire. It was during this time that Tarron decided to do everything in his power to stop the pain and suffering. He resumed his studies with a fierce intensity, and he eventually became a powerful priest. With the conclusion of the Darkwalker War, Tarron felt useless, so he decided to travel back to Faerun to explore and lend his help where it was needed. He eventually met Tiran and Chiron, and together they founded the Bandaged Wound. ❑

The Living City

Traagor's Tours and Souvenir Shop

by Halina Adamski

A city as large as Ravens Bluff has hundreds of sights for visitors to see, but where to start? Traagor's provides the answer, offering the most interesting, informative and well-researched tours available.

The tiny shop is located in the Uptown section, within a short walk of several average-to-good quality inns and taverns. It is wedged between two adjoining buildings. Traagor's only occupies the ground floor, the other floors house a beauty parlor and a used dress shop.

The storefront is crammed with trinkets and souvenirs. They overflow from shelves and glitter garishly from showcases. They also hang from the ceiling, causing taller customers to duck.

The items for sale include:

Hanged man doll: Crows perch on the scaffold. The doll wears a banner proclaiming, "Just hanging around Ravens Bluff." (several sizes, 1 cp to 1 sp)

Tunics, arm bands, shield covers, banners, etc.: These items are embroidered or painted with slogans advertising local shops, such as: "Seek your fortune at the Crescent Moon"; "Volodar's—Reach for the Stardust"; "Elonia's Beauty Shoppe, the first step to a better you."

King the Dog stuffed toy: (2 sp)

Tower of Luck quill sharpeners: (1 cp)

Candles: Shaped like various notable buildings (1 cp to 1 sp)

Drinking vessels: Each is painted with the sign of a local inn or tavern (1 cp)

Maps of city are available for 1 gp. These are two-color woodcuts that list local curiosities, tourist attractions, and prominent businesses which advertise through Traagor's. *Traagor's Guide to Inns and Taverns* is also available for 1 gp. The *Guide* is intended for those who cannot read—as well as for those who can. Each listing depicts the inn or tavern's signs in addition to one to four star symbols to rate them.

Some more expensive items are also kept in stock, such as Brothers Gaewilder toys, and shell necklaces made by Quarak Sludge of Embrol Sludge's Eatery and Shell Shop. These are kept in the small showcase near the right-hand wall.

Behind the large showcase, a pair of youngsters do a rapid business painting tunics and tabards with any slogan desired by the customer. (The prices vary by intricacy of design and number of letters, but generally run from 2 cp to 5 sp).

Rooth Traagor watches over things from behind a counter at the back of the shop's main room. She is a large woman and has a commanding presence. The locked cashbox under Rooth's counter never holds more than 50 gp in assorted coins, mostly copper. Excess money is deposited in a knothole in the wall which leads to a hidden closet room. At the end of the day Rooth calls several of the urchins who wait behind the curtain to bring the day's profits to a nearby moneychanger.

The area behind the curtain is empty except for a few folded pallets where one to four adolescents remain on call in case tour guides are needed. A door leads to a narrow alley where several more doors are within calling distance. The Traagors rehabilitate local orphans, giving them jobs as tour guides and tabard painters, and helping to arrange apprenticeships for them with local businesses.

Characters who insult "Granny" Traagor or "Uncle" Eldwin or harm the pair are likely to find themselves beset by knife-wielding urchins.

The closet holds more pallets and boxes of unshelved trinkets. The secret door leads to a tiny room which is used as a receiving chamber for extra coins. The room also serves as a temporary hiding place for youngsters wanted by the Watch. Rooth believes that imprisonment will only serve to punish urchins, not rehabilitate them. Her system works much better, at least in her mind. There is no other exit from this room. When it's safe, the urchins escape by hiding beneath Rooth's voluminous skirts.

Rooth's son, Eldwin, arranges and researches tours from his small, book lined office. General tours cost 1 sp per person per day, twice that at night. Admission fees to exhibits and public buildings are not included. Two to four of these tours are scheduled daily (3d20 tourists usually attend each). Special interest tours take place every tenday. These cost 2 sp per person per day. They include:

The Temple tour: Temples, shrines, and religious sites.

Magic tour: The magical college, herb, magic, and alchemy shops, etc.

Warrior's tour: Battlefields, mercenary company headquarters, etc.

Romantic tour: Boating, picnicking in public gardens, scenes of tragic love stories, and more (for lovers only).

Rakehell's tour: Taverns, gaming rooms, entertainment establishments, etc.

Haunted House tour: The name says it all.

Individual or private group tours cost 1 gp to 10 gp per person per day, depending on how much Eldwin thinks the tourist can afford. Tour guides get a half hour off for midday and evening meals. If for some reason, the party requires them at those times, the tourists are expected to pay for the guides' meals and drinks.

Eldwin is available to direct tours himself, however these cost double the usual amount.

The shop is open from three hours after dawn to three hours after dusk. Tours start promptly at one half-hour after opening. The Traagors have apartments elsewhere in the city, but at night the shop is generally occupied by several (usually no more than eight) employees who sleep in the shop and serve as extremely loyal guards.

Other than the cheap souvenirs, the shop holds little treasure. At night the money from the cashbox, as well as Sludge's jewelry, Gaewilders' toys and any other expensive items are hidden in the secret room. Eldwin's office also contains 12 scrolls and tomes on Ravens Bluff history, worth 200-500 gp each. These take 1d4 hours of searching to find. However, a character cannot tell them apart from the other books and maps unless he or she has the looting proficiency, or unless the character can read Common *and* has one of the following proficiencies: ancient history, local history (for Ravens Bluff area), or appraisal. Additionally, PCs trying to fence these items will come to Eldwin's attention, as he is the major local purchaser of such works.

Eldwin's office also contains a tapestry depicting a young woman leaping from a cliff above the sea. This is Armellade, a love lorn lass (and reputed local ghost) whose statue stands near the waterfront. Armellade's statue is included in both the romantic and haunted house tours. Rooth made the tapestry. The workmanship is exquisite, and the tapestry is worth 500 gp at any market. It weighs 100 pounds, however, and would be recognizable to most urchins and many other townsfolk if sold locally.

Rooth Traagor

0 Level Human Female

STR: 6
INT: 13
WIS: 16
DEX: 8
CON: 7
CHA: 11
AC Normal: 10
AC Rear: 10
Hit Points: 2
Alignment: Neutral Good
Languages: Common
THAC0: 20

Age: 68
Height: 5′ 8″
Weight: 243 lbs.
Hair/Eyes: Black (gray streaks)/Brown

Weapon Proficiencies: None
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Artistic ability (embroidery) (16), etiquette (11), read/write Common (14)

Rooth has dark, freckled skin. She generally covers her bulk in too-tight gowns of expensive but practical fabric.

The daughter of an impoverished member of the gentry, Rooth taught proper deportment to noble young ladies (she claims Lady Lauren DeVillars as one of her more prominent students).

She married a sage, the retainer of a student's family. Simethedys Traagor was more than twice Rooth's age and died when their son Eldwin was young, leaving a small library of local history (including many historical writings of his own) and little else.

Rooth arranged for Eldwin to be tutored alongside the nobles' children. When she saw how well he had absorbed the contents of his father's library, she conceived the idea of the tour service. The business has become so successful that Eldwin alone can't guide all the tours being demanded. In an effort to fill their need for guides, as well as to "clean up" the area to attract tourism, she hires local urchins. After all, who knows Ravens Bluff better than they?

Brisk and formal, but soft-hearted, Rooth is planning a souvenir factory as her next project, to be owned and operated by the youngsters.

Eldwin Traagor

0 Level Human Male Sage (History of Ravens Bluff and environs)

STR: 8
INT: 18
WIS: 17
DEX: 6
CON: 11
CHA: 9
AC Normal: 10
AC Rear: 10
Hit Points: 3
Alignment: Neutral Good
Languages: Common, Elvish, Halfling, Thorass
THAC0: 20

Age: 43
Height: 5′ 10″
Weight: 170 lbs.
Hair/Eyes: Brown/Hazel

Weapon Proficiencies: None
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Local history (9), read/write Common (19), read/write Thorass (16), etiquette (9), sage ability (16)

Eldwin has thinning hair, watery eyes, and a protruding potbelly.

He is shy, but hides this under a very proper mein. He has an intense love of his studies, and he always becomes animated when discussing the area's history.

Eldwin is a shrewd bargainer, squeezing wealthy parties for every copper he can. He does not seek the money for himself. He and his mother are content to live in their comfortable, but unimposing apartments. His dream is to amass a grand library which will be open to the public.

The entire shop and tour operation illustrates his business sense. For example, the painted tunics, tabards, and drinking vessels all advertise local shops, as well as Traagor's Tours. These products, and the city maps, are paid for in part by the businesses advertised, though Traagors' reaps all the profits.

Lately, Eldwin has become annoyed with his mother, who is pressing him to take a wife. Eldwin always expected to get married, but is reluctant to accept a bride who does not possess his intelligence or his passion for history.

Although many sages are also wizards, Eldwin had neither the inclination nor the funds to study the Art. For purposes of using Table 63 in the DMG (Sage Modifiers, page 107), consider Eldwin's library as somewhere between non-existent and partial, giving him at least a −4 penalty. Though he owns a good number of books, he can't afford the rarer and more costly volumes. (He's saving up, though!)

Urchins

Traagor's tour guides all possess the local history proficiency (with scores ranging from 9 to 12). The tabard painters have artistic ability (with scores ranging from 8 to 14, which is why the tabards are selling so cheap). Many urchins have the reading/writing (Common) proficiency. Additionally, urchins may possess other general or thief proficiencies.

Urchins: Int Low to Average; AL N; AC 10; MV 12; HD 1; hp 1-4 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3 (knife) or 1-4 (sling); SZ M; ML 10; XP 15 each.

Sample Tour Stops

The various tours might include highlights such as the following:

The Gallows Gate

"See those beams over there?" says your guide. "That's the original scaffolds. This wall encircles one of the oldest portions of the city. Can you see? Those three beams right there with the bits of frayed rope hanging from them. No, not that one, over to the left, yes, that's it! 'Course they're not used anymore. Now they got new scaffolds down at the harbor.

"Folks call this the Gallows Gate. There's lots of tales about it, but the most famous is that of Orlean and Tommeroy the Unlucky. Orlean was a cat burglar. A good one, too—stole the temple regalia right off Lathander's altar! Well, they finally caught him, and he was sentenced to hang at the Gallows Gate. Tommeroy the

Lucky—so they called him in those days—was Orlean's partner. Some say they were brothers, too. Tommeroy got himself a potion which caused him to become invisible. Everyone expected he would free Orlean, but the hanging went off as scheduled, and Tommeroy just disappeared. They didn't find Tommeroy's body until a few days later. Tommeroy had tripped in the ropes and, still invisible, had been hung himself."

Thieves and other ne'er-do-wells who would flout the law have taken to using this grisly landmark as a rendezvous spot. They refer to it merely as "the Gate." When making a pact, thieves in Ravens Bluff swear to hold to their sides of the bargain "until we swing side by side at the Gate." The phrase has stuck even though the scaffold's location has been changed.

Tower of Luck

Up, and up your guide leads you along the narrow stairway. At 50', 100' and 150' you come to landings with small, narrow windows. You long to stop, but your guide urges you to reach the tower's pinnacle. "It's good luck," he says, and you note with disgust that he seems not nearly as winded as you. At last you reach the top. Stepping out onto the roof, you find that it is unremarkable, other than that it commands a stunning view of the city. The roof is flat and covered with flagstones. Three-foot high crenelated walls encircle you. "What's so lucky about this place?" somebody growls, scowling at the guide. "Maybe you'll be lucky if we don't toss you over the edge." The guide just grins. Then he moves over to a platform you hadn't previously noticed.

Steps lead up to a plank about a yard wide which juts past the wall. A plaque reads, "Danger! Jump from platform only."

"Follow me and you'll find your luck!" Your guide chortles and steps off the platform. You watch, cringing, as he plummets downward and out of sight.

This 20' square, 200' tall tower can be placed above any public building in Ravens Bluff (church, courthouse, city wall, Lord Mayor's palace, etc.). Otherwise it can be free-standing. Its exterior meshes with the building below it.

Characters who jump from the roof are saved from harm by a permanent *feather fall* which takes effect 10 feet from the ground. The plunge also confers a +1 to all saving throws for a period of 1d8 days. This bonus can only be acquired once per year, no matter how many times the characters jump from the tower.

There is a catch, however. Characters who take the plunge must save vs. Constitution (without the +1 luck bonus) or be so terrified and sickened that they temporarily lose three points of Strength. This penalty lasts 1d12+2 turns. A *cure light wounds* spell or similar curative magic ends the penalty immediately. Long exposure has made the guides immune to the illness. Characters with airborne riding proficiency also are immune to the illness. Characters who use their own magic to break the fall (*rings of feather falling* or *fly* or *levitate* spells and similar magics) take no damage, but they don't get the +1 luck bonus either.

The permanent *feather fall* effect is very small, and characters who jump from the parapet without using the platform plunge to the ground and take 20d6 points of damage (and they don't get the saving throw bonus).

A local mage, Joaquin the Prankster built the tower some 300 years ago.

The Goat Oracle

The stuffed head of an aged gray billy goat is mounted above one of the city's gates.

"It just appeared there in the night," says your guide. "Four winters ago, I think it was. No one knows who placed it here, or why. Some people say that the goat speaks prophecy to some of the people who pass through the gate.

"Ludia Costmiller—she's the daughter of a wool merchant—was told to wait on the steps of Tymora's temple. Well, she did that. She sat there for three days, and on the third day, who should show up but the nephew of the second priestess, just returned from the North. He was rich and looking for a wife! They've been married three winters now, and they have a fine son.

"The coppersmith Wyldyl Carbuncle was told to sell his shop and invest in shipping. He did, and he's rich now. Would never have done so good on a smith's wage.

"Now Rillin Dorst, they say he failed to heed the goat's instructions to take the first ship out of Ravens Bluff, and two weeks later his house caught fire and he burned to death."

Questioning the guide further reveals that despite this "evidence" (for there are rarely other witnesses when the goat speaks) many of the locals scoff at these stories. When someone acts in an impulsive and seemingly irrational way, he is said to be "listening to the goat."

The goat head does not radiate magic, at least not while it isn't speaking, and no one yet has been able to test it while it is speaking. Several mages have waited near the head, but it never spoke when they were near.

Whether this is a hoax or a delusion, or the goat is being used as a vehicle by some obscure deity is for the DM™ to decide. The goat can be used to give clues to confused player characters, to prophecy their future, or to make suggestions that will lead to adventures.

Footsteps of the Gods

The tour takes you to a rocky cliff on the northern side of the city. Looking down you can see the brightly-dyed silks and canvas of the tent town. But what holds your eye is a pair of gigantic human-shaped footprints imprinted in the rock beneath you. Having given you the raven's eye view of the city, your tour guide brings you closer, and you find that the footprints are as long as two tall men lying head to foot, and a sword's length deep. They are larger even than the footprint of the biggest giant!

Your guide speaks up, "The dwarves maintain that these footprints were not carved, but were possibly pressed into the rock in a time when it was still mud.

"Followers of Ilmater believe that this is one of the spots from which that god preached and healed the sick and wounded in elder days when the gods walked freely across Faerun. Note the indentation over here, to the left, which might be from a giant crutch, and the irregular bumps here, which might be bandages wrapped around part of the foot.

Continued on page 31

Living City Magic

Enchanted Items From Ambassador Carrague

by James Buchanan

Ambassador Carrague is undoubtedly Ravens Bluff's most powerful wizard. Carrague is a known eccentric, as a look at the following sample items from his workshop will reveal:

Carrague's Steam Machine: Many years ago, Elminster gave Carrague a dozen line drawings and notes about a steam-powered machine that rides upon iron rails. No one in Ravens Bluff knows where Elminster found such a device. Elminster himself will only say that many years ago he drew several detailed pictures of an "Iron Horse" while visiting a far off land.

Carrague spent several months engineering a machine similar to the one Elminster had drawn. Carrague knew of several rivers where rapids or waterfalls impede traffic. In some of the less densely populated areas of the Inner Sea, building canals and locks around these obstacles would be prohibitively expensive. Therefore, Carrague thought that a steam machine moving on rails would be a fine alternative.

Carrague ultimately built two such machines. They look like flatcars fitted with wooded cabins. Inside the cabin is a padded leather chair and a control lever that has forward, neutral, and reverse settings. There is also a stove to keep the cabin warm and a brake wheel to slow, stop, or lock the machine in place.

Just outside the cabin is another Carrague invention, a *decanter of endless steam,* connected to a single vertical cylinder. The cylinder's piston drives the wheels via connecting rods and gears. These machines are 15 feet long, six feet wide, and three feet high. They weigh a little more than two tons. The machines are designed to run on pairs of wooden rails four feet apart. Carrague surmised that iron rails would be too expensive. A massive steel "eye" juts from each end of the machine—these are used for hooking unpowered flatcars to the machine to allow it to haul cargo.

In the end, merchants and caravan masters refused to buy the machines. When running, they hissed and belched out steam like angry dragons, throwing quite a scare into ordinary passersby. Also, nobody wanted to go to the expense of laying down stretches of wooden rails when cleared paths for normal draft animals seemed to do the job just as well. Of the two machines, one, which Carrague dubbed *The Spartan,* was sold to group of dwarven miners who promptly disassembled the machine and hauled it away in several horse-drawn wagons. No one knows what happened to *The Spartan.* The second machine, called *The Titan,* is intact and kept inside Carrague's residence in Ravens Bluff.

If running on level ground and intact rails, one of these machines can haul 40 tons of cargo (though it would take at least five additional flatcars to hold this much) at a movement rate of 36.
XP Value: —/1,250
GP Value: 250/4,250
The numbers before the slashes are for a machine without the *decanter.*

Carrague's Decanter of Endless Steam: These stoppered flasks look like ordinary brass containers. They are warm to the touch and radiate both Enchantment and Conjuration/Summoning magic. When the stopper is removed, and the proper words spoken, a constant flow of steam will pour out. Similar to a *decanter of endless water,* A *decanter of endless steam* has three separate commands for the amount of steam produced:

Teakettle: A slow trickle of steam that sounds like a low-pitched whistle forms a sphere of scalding vapor. During the first round, the sphere has a two-foot diameter. Each round thereafter the sphere expands one foot until it reaches a maximum diameter of 10 feet. Characters inside the sphere take one point of damage from the steam each round, save vs. breath weapon for no damage.

Small Geyser: A translucent flow of steam that sounds like a high pitched whistle fills a six-foot sphere in one round; this expands an additional three feet each round to a maximum diameter of 30 feet. Characters inside the sphere take 1d6 points of damage each round, save vs. breath weapon for half.

Large Geyser: A gush of thick steam that sounds like a loud roaring fills a 10-foot sphere in one round; this expands an additional five feet each round to a maximum diameter of 50 feet. Characters inside the sphere take 3d6 points of damage each round, save vs. breath weapon for half damage.

The two geyser settings are used to power *Carrague's Steam Machines.* The large geyser setting produces considerable back pressure, and the holder must be well braced or be knocked backwards. The force of the geyser will kill small animals and normal insects.

At any setting, a command word must be given to stop the flow of steam.
XP Value: 1,250
GP Value: 4,000

Carrague's Iron Golem: Nineteen years ago, Carrague created what he thinks is a better and more useful iron golem. Unlike a normal golem, Carrague's golem has no elemental spirit for an animating force. Instead, a fighter wears a suit of magical, but plain-looking, brown leather armor with a metal helmet fitted with ruby lenses. This armor allows the fighter to control at a distance all the golem's actions.

The golem instantly responds to any motion the fighter makes. The control range is 120 feet. The golem also has the same THAC0 as the controlling fighter. In addition, the controlling fighter uses the ruby lenses to see through the golem's eyes. The fighter must mimic any action the golem undertakes, which can make the fighter rather conspicuous to opponents. However, the fighter need not have the golem in view to control it. Controlling the golem requires some concentration. Damage to the fighter does not break control over the golem, but the fighter can do nothing else while operating the golem.

Carrague's Iron Golem has all the powers and immunities listed for iron golems in the *Monstrous Compendium,* except that it cannot breathe poison gas. If the fighter wearing the armor is killed, paralyzed, or rendered unconscious, the golem ceases to function. Destruction of the armor renders the golem useless, and vice versa.
XP Value: 4,000
GP Value: 40,000

Character Generation

How to Create Living City Characters

RPGA® Network Living City tournaments are held at conventions throughout the world.

Network members play their own characters in these events. The more tournaments you enter, the more levels, power, and wealth your character gains.

Here are guidelines for creating your own Living City character and for modifying the character when he or she gains experience points in a tournament.

All Characters: start at 1st level and must fit the AD&D® 2nd Edition rules.

Character Classes Available: fighter, ranger, paladin, cleric, priest, thief, bard, and wizard. You also can use the character kits presented in books such as *The Complete Thief's Handbook, The Complete Wizard's Handbook,* etc. If your character has a kit you **must** bring the appropriate book to the tournament for the DM™ to reference.

Races Available: Human, half-elf, half-orc, elf, halfling, gnome, and dwarf.

Multi-Class Characters: are allowed. However, keep in mind it takes longer for these demi-humans to advance, as they must divide any experience they earn.

Dual-Class Characters: are allowed. See the dual-class section on the following page.

Psionics: are not allowed.

Creating A Character

You must use one of the official Living City Character sheets.

You are responsible for keeping a copy of your character and a list of all the items, wealth, and experience points he or she earns during tournament play.

1. You have 84 points to assign to your character's Strength, Intelligence, Wisdom, Dexterity, Constitution, Charisma, and Comeliness scores. Comeliness is a Living City house rule. No score can be lower than 6 or higher than 18. However, fighters can can purchase 10 points of exceptional strength for each extra point spent. For example, if your fighter has an 18/30 Strength, it will costs 21 attribute points (18 + 3 = 21). Don't apply racial adjustments to your character's attributes—the character's statistics are "adjusted" when you assign your 84 points.

2. Your character begins at 1st level, and must meet the required minimum statistic scores for his or her class listed in the *Players' Handbook*. For example, a bard must have a Dexterity of 12, Intelligence of 13, Charisma of 15 and be a human or half-elf.

3. Select weapon and nonweapon proficiencies.

4. Choose an alignment: Lawful Good, Neutral Good, Chaotic Good, Neutral, Chaotic Neutral, and Lawful Neutral. Druids must be Neutral.

Hit Points

Living City player characters have maximum hit points at first and second levels. Hit points for high Constitution scores are added to this. For example, a second level ranger with a 16 Constitution has 24 hit points. At third level and above, PCs gain half the maximum hit points of their class, plus Constitution bonuses. The ranger in the previous example would have 31 hit points at 3rd level.

First Level Characters

- Characters begin with maximum gold pieces for their classes; 200 for a fighter, ranger, or paladin; 180 for a cleric or druid; 120 for a rogue; and 50 for a wizard. This amount can be spent on equipment.
- Select one of the following: *shield +1, ring of protection +1, bracers of defence AC 8,* a melee weapon *+1,* or five expendable missile weapons *+1,* such as darts, arrows, or crossbow bolts. Daggers and other throwing weapons count as the character's one *+1* melee weapon.
- Select one of the following potions: *healing, animal control, clairaudience, fire resistance,* or *ventriloquism.*
- Choose one non-standard mundane item, such as a bag of marbles, a pouch of tobacco, or a cookbook.
- Wizard spell books contain four 1st level spells of your choice. Specialist wizards cannot have spells from an opposing school.
- Bard spell books contain two 1st level spells of your choice.

Second Level Characters

- Select one additional 1st level spell for your wizard's spell book.
- Choose two 1st level spells for your bard's spell book.
- Add one point to your character's Charisma score and one point to an attribute of your choice. If your character already has a Charisma score of 18, you can assign both points as you desire. No attribute can exceed 18.

Third Level Characters

- Add one 1st level and three 2nd level spells to your wizard's spell book.
- Choose two additional 1st level spells for your bard's spell book.
- Add one point to your character's Charisma score and one point to an attribute of your choice. If your character already has a Charisma score of 18, you can assign both points as you desire. No attribute can exceed 18.

Fourth Level Characters

- Choose one additional 1st level spell and two 2nd level spells for your wizard's spell book.
- Select two 2nd level spells for your bard's spell book.
- Add two points to your character's attribute scores. No attribute can exceed 18.

Fifth Level Characters

- Add one 1st level spell, one 2nd level spell, and three 3rd level spells to your wizard's spell book.
- Choose one additional 1st level spell and two 2nd level spells for your bard's spell book.
- Add one point to any of your character's attribute scores. No score can exceed 18.

Sixth Level Characters

- Select one additional 1st level spell, one 2nd level spell, and one 3rd level spell for your wizard's spell book.
- Choose one additional 1st level spell and two 2nd level spells for your bard's spell book.
- Add one point to any of your character's attribute scores. No score can exceed 18.

Seventh Level Characters

- Choose one 1st level spell, one 2nd level spell, one 3rd level spell, and three 4th level spells for your wizard's spell book.
- Choose one 2nd level spell and two 3rd level spells for your bard's spell book.
- Add one point to any of your character's attribute scores. No score can exceed 18.

Eighth Level Characters

- Add one 3rd level spell and one 4th level spell to your wizard's spell book.
- Choose another 2nd level spell and one 3rd level spell for your bard's spell book.
- Add one point to your character's Charisma score and one point to an attribute of your choice. If your character already has a Charisma score of 18, you can distribute both points as you desire. No attribute can exceed 18.

Ninth Level Characters

- Add one 3rd level spell, one 4th level spell, and three 5th level spells to your wizard's spell book.
- Choose another 3rd level spell for your bard's spell book.
- Add one point to one of your character's attribute scores. No attribute can exceed 18.

10th Level Characters

- Add one 3rd level spell, one 4th level spell, and one 5th level spell to your wizard's spell book.
- Choose two 4th level spells for your bard's spell book.
- Add one point to one of your character's attribute scores. No attribute can exceed 18.

11th Level Characters

- Add one 4th level spell and one 5th level spell to your wizard's spell book.
- Choose another 4th level spell for your bard's spell book.

12th Level Characters

- Add one 5th level spell and three 6th level spells to your wizard's spell book.

Comeliness

Comeliness reflects your character's physical attractiveness. It can impact the initial reactions NPCs have to your character. Comeliness is not Charisma. The latter score represents your character's force of personality.

Unlike in the original edition of the AD&D® game, your character's Comeliness score is not adjusted based on Charisma, nor can characters with high Comeliness score "fascinate" others. Comeliness in Living City play affects reaction bonuses that are tied to Charisma. Therefore, a character with a high Charisma and a high Comeliness has a significant reaction bonus.

Comeliness	Reaction Adjustment
6	−2
7	−1
8-12	0
13	+1
14	+2
15	+3
16	+5
17	+6
18	+7

Dual-Class Characters

Becoming a dual class character is not free in our Living City campaign. It will cost your character experience points equal to half what it would take to reach 2nd level of his or her new profession. These experience points "buy" the new class.

For example, Artorus The Bold is a human wizard who seeks to become a fighter. It takes 2,000 experience points to be a 2nd level fighter, therefore Artorus must spend half that amount—1,000—to buy the fighter class. Artorus spends the experience points, which are erased from his experience point total, and now is a first level fighter.

Cost	Class
1,000	fighter
1,125	ranger
1,125	paladin
1,250	wizard
750	cleric
1,000	druid
625	thief
625	bard

- A character must be at least 2nd level before switching classes.
- Only humans can be dual class characters.
- A character must have an ability score of 15 or more in the prime requisites of his original class and scores of 17 or higher in the prime requisites of any class he switches to.
- There is no limit to the number of classes a character can switch to, provided the character meets the requirements above.
- Your character begins his new character class at 1st level with 0 experience points in that class.
- Your character retains his previous hit points and hit dice, gains the proficiencies, nonweapon proficiencies and abilities of his new class, and uses combat and saving throw tables applicable to the new class.
- A dual-class character does not gain additional attribute points until his or her new class exceeds the level of his or her previous class.
- All experience points gained now apply to the new class. However, if your character uses skills, spells, or other special abilities of his previous class, the experience point award for a particular adventure does not count. Refer to the *Players' Handbook* section on dual-class characters for more information.
- The restrictions set forth are in effect until the character reaches the same level as his old class. For example, Artorus was a 4th level wizard before he switched to a fighter. When he reaches 5th level as a fighter, he can use the abilities of both classes equally, with no experience point loss.

All Living City Characters

Characters receive experience points for completing tasks and defeating NPCs and monsters in Living City tournaments—just like characters in a campaign. This means that first level characters will reach second level before third level characters attain fourth level, and this ensures that play is balanced between the characters.

Purchasing Equipment

PCs can purchase weapons, armor, supplies and other materials at the prices listed in the *Players' Handbook*. You can make these purchases outside of tournament time.

Additional items for sale can be found in tomes such as *The Complete Thief's Handbook* and *Aurora's Whole Realms Catalogue.*

Magic items are acquired only over the course of tournament play and at special convention activities such as Living City Magic Shops. Trading magic items among PCs is welcome. ❑

Living City Character Record Sheet

Player Name _____ **Membership Number** _____

Character Name _____ **Alignment** _____

Deity _____ **Race** _____ **Gender** _____
Height _____ **Weight** _____ **Age** _____
Hair/Eyes Color _____

Class _____ **Level** _____ **Experience Points** _____

STR _____	+H/Dmg _____	Wt# _____	MP ____	Doors _____	BB/Gates _____	
INT _____	#Lang _____	Maximum Spell Level _____				
WIS _____	Magic Def Adj _____	Bonus Spells _____				
DEX _____	React Adj _____	Missile Attack Adj _____		Def Adj _____		
CON _____	Hp Adj _____	System Shock _____		Resurection _____		
CHR _____	Max Henchmen _____	Loyalty _____	Reaction Adj _____			
COM _____	Reaction _____					

Hit Points _____
AC Front _____
AC Rear _____
THACO _____

Current Hit Points

Weapon Proficiencies

Nonweapon Proficiencies

Thieving Skills

PP	OL	FT	MS	DN	HS	CW	RL

Saving Throws

Paralyzation, poison, or death magic _____
Rod, staff, or wand _____
Petrification or polymorph _____
Breath weapon _____
Spell _____

Saving throw bonuses:

Undead Turning Table

Skeleton	
Zombie	
Ghoul	
Shadow	
Wight	
Ghast	
Wraith	
Mummy	
Spectre	
Vampire	
Ghost	
Lich	
Special	

Weapon	THACO	Dmg S/M	Dmg L	Range S/M/L

Equipment

Magic Items

Spells/Day: _____

Spheres Available (priest/druid): _____

_____

Schools Available (wizard): _____

Spell Book

Spells Memorized

Racial Abilities: _____

Wealth

Use six adjectives to describe your Living City character

_____

_____

_____

_____

The Everwinking Eye

The Schemes Of The Zhentarim

by Ed Greenwood

"The gods wear twisted smiles when they look down on us. Why, I've even found love in Zhentil Keep!"

The character Ombreezse, said to the character Alagath, in the play *Seven Dragons Aloft,* written in the Year of Falling Stones by the bard Tilshamber of Neverwinter. The first five words have become a popular (cynical) saying of the Realms.

Our ongoing tour of the Realms continues down the dark alleys and proud streets of mighty Zhentil Keep. Last time, we explored the Zhentarim's dark history and how Manshoon and Fzoul came to power. Now it's time to look at what they and their city are busy with right now.

The Zhentarim roster changes constantly with the fortunes of war and personal folly. The organization is secretive for obvious reasons, and cabals, intrigue, and false-identity schemes make it hard even for Zhentarim members to know what's going on. DMs can safely add any characters they wish to the ranks of the Black Network's underpriests and magelings (any wizard or priest of Bane of 6th level or less).

In Zhentil Keep at any given "ordinary" time (i.e. not during a war, or when the Black Network is gathered to meet over some important matter or other), the Zhentarim are solidly represented. These Zhents include a dozen or more priests of Bane at The Black Altar temple, plus half a dozen or so novices; about three dozen mages, nine of whom are of 6th level or greater, plus perhaps another dozen eager 1st level apprentices; an unknown number of men-at-arms and thieves; and slave-traders, caravan-masters, merchants, and informants of large but uncertain numbers. There also are five assassins, who are known as the "Black Moons." These five have replaced an earlier group known as "The Three."

Those who have fought the Zhentarim and lived to tell the tale advise that slain Zhents should be burned—especially their heads—or they may be faced in battle again and again. The priests of Bane raise Zhentarim from the dead often and quickly.

The Zhentarim occupy themselves with two major projects. The first is thwarting their growing roster of enemies. In rough order of importance to the Zhents, the major foes are: The Knights of the North, Hillsfar, Mulmaster, Cormyr, Sembia, the forces of The High Imperceptor of Bane, The Knights of Myth Drannor, and The Cult of the Dragon. The second project is establishing an unbroken, exclusive overland trade route from Zhentil Keep to Waterdeep.

The first activity is one of intrigues, skirmishes, vandalism, spying, and the occasional night raid or assassination—in short, the "dirty tricks" that make any campaign exciting, and the villains truly villainous.

The second activity is the grander one; the establishment and maintenance of such a long trade route is very difficult. If it can be managed, the Zhentarim will be rich beyond their wildest dreams—but they'll also be very busy administering the whole affair. Many foes must be defeated to make the route a reality, and these foes must continually be held at bay if the route is to endure. Brigands have begun to come from all over the Realms just to prey on the heavily laden Zhentarim caravans.

To examine the routes taken by these rich collections of trade-goods, it is best to consult a map of the Realms, particularly the area from Zhentil Keep in the east to The Sword Coast far to the west.

From Zhentil Keep, let us follow a caravan on its long journey. The goods begin their trip in wagons, which are loaded on barges in Zhentil Keep and then poled and drawn by oxen by means of long cables, up the River Tesh to ruined Teshwave.

Under the protection of the encamped Zhentilar armies, the wagons are hauled onto land, and begin the trip west by road, via Voonlar on the Shadowdale-Shadow Gap road.

Zhentil Keep is currently battling Hillsfar for control of Yulash to gain a faster, road-only route. Simultaneously, they are trying to conquer Daggerdale to establish a "safe" trade route between Dagger Falls and the road near Spiderhaunt Wood. The bard Randal Morn, rightful ruler of Daggerdale, is aided by Shadowdale, Cormyr, and especially by The Knights of Myth Drannor. He is proving astonishingly persistent in his efforts to retain his embattled land.

The Zhentarim want to establish a short cut across the southern edge of Anauroch. The Zents hope to begin this shorter route from the headwaters of the Tesh. Accordingly, roads up the valley of the Tesh are constantly being improved; back-breaking work that Zhentilar soldiers and slaves alike heartily hate.

Some Zhentilar caravans work their way along the Desert's Edge to the Goblin Marches, crossing the Desertsmouth Mountains by the little-known Teshenfall Pass near Tethyamar. This is a long and difficult route that can be deadly if dust storms blow up off the desert. The Zhentarim vastly prefer the faster, safer route by road—either through Shadowdale from Voonlar, or from Daggerdale to the road west of Shadowdale. However, they stick to the river route if the caravan is weak.

Western Shadowdale has several entrances to drow-held Underdark areas. They are located in the cellars of the Tower of Ashaba, near the ruins of castle Grimstead (which was built by the drow, long ago), and under Shadowdale's Old Skull Inn, which gives access to a subterranean lake. The Zhentarim quietly trade in slaves with the drow whenever The Knights of Myth Drannor are not present to give battle. The Zhentarim have shrewdly required the drow to come to the surface, where they must take their own risks, which include running the gauntlet of adventurers and patrols from Shadowdale. The drow most often use the Grimstead entrances and meet the Zhentarim at the ruins of an abandoned giant-hold, The Flaming Tower, some six miles north of Shadowdale.

Zhentarim mages and a variety of magically-controlled and created beasts skirmish constantly with Cormyrean patrols in the vicinity of Tilverton, purely to keep Shadow Gap free of Cormyrean control. The Zhentarim themselves do not attempt to control access to the Gap; to do so would invite the immediate wrath of many powers, which in turn probably would result in

the military defeat and subsequent destruction of Zhentil Keep itself. For the same reason, only a few Zhent-equipped brigands harry the major overland roads in the east.

South of the Shadow Gap, Zhentarim caravans head due west into the dangerous Stonelands, a region infested with monsters and brigands (the latter either desperate outlaws or large and well-armed bodies of Zhentilar hirelings). Only Zhentarim caravans are allowed through this region; much Zhentarim magic is devoted to ensuring that the Stonelands and the Goblin Marches remain free of Cormyrean control. Both areas are hilly and desolate. Windswept grassy plateaus broken by many gullies and deeper, wooded ravines make up the terrain.

Zhentarim patrols made up of small bands of foot soldiers or lone, wand-equipped wizards riding foulwings (wyvern-like flying beasts detailed in the *Menzoberranzan* boxed set) keep this region dangerous to all save Zhentarim forces. These troops are based in the great fortress of Darkhold (detailed in the *Castles* boxed set) and in many other small, hidden ring-forts and caveholds. They maintain an iron control over Yellow Snake Pass and the Desert's Edge east of Skull Gorge.

Next, the caravans pass into the "Tunlands," or "Tun Plain." These are swampy, rolling grasslands that surround the Marsh of Tun and the Tun River that empties into the western arm of The Sea of Fallen Stars. The arm is dubbed the Dragonmere, and its waters are cold and only slightly saline, unlike the sea east of the Neck.

The Tunlands are home to the Tunlar, sheep-rearing, wandering bands of barbarians. The ferocious Tunlar are expert scimitar wielders and horse archers. Their numbers are dwindling, however, because the Zhentarim have quietly slaughtered most of them with magic. They also have hired southern mercenaries to patrol and skirmish with merchants or Cormyrean "wide patrols" that stray into the great valley of the Tun.

These hired Calishite and Tashlutan "bloodswords" operate west of Eagle Peak (a Cormyrean way-fortress) and north of The Bridge of Fallen Men. They effectively keep caravans and explorers, especially the persistent explorer-merchants of Amn, out of the area.

Zhentarim caravans bound for The Empires of the Sands cross the Icemyr and travel southwest to Darkhold, crossing The Far Hills by secret trails heavily guarded by Zhentilar. Escorted by mounted Zhentilar troops, such caravans join the caravan road somewhere between Corm Orp and Hluthvar, or between Hluthvar and Asbravn. They start using the road in different places to avoid making a single, clear trail. Sometimes they cross the road north of Asbravn and join the road to Berdusk from the north. This region is a perilous frontier between the armed might of the Zhentarim and the law and order of the farming communities along the caravan-roads.

The Zhentarim plan to eventually seize and control Asbravn, and with it all east-west trade that does not go by barge along the river to or from Iriaebor. The Riders In Red Cloaks, who defend Asbravn, have powerful help from interests in Iriaebor, Cormyr, and Amn, meaning that success for the Black Network seems unlikely in the near future.

To the north, the Zhentarim have been more successful. Trade bound for Waterdeep and the Sword Coast North proceeds through Yellow Snake Pass; the Desert's Edge to the north is kept closed to everyone by Zhentarim patrols.

A great wyrm black dragon, Harondalbar, keeps its lair in one of the myriad rocky pinnacles that form the walls of the pass. These pinnacles are honeycombed with numerous caves, and Harondalbar's lair is only one of many cavern complexes with dangerous inhabitants. The Zhentarim feed the dragon, praise it, and bring it both treasure and sport in the form of creatures to hunt (usually Zhents who have been sentenced to death).

Agents of The Cult of the Dragon eagerly seek out the lair, but they have been slain by the dozens since the Zhentarim first patrolled the area.

The Zhentarim also keep a variety of fearsome monsters, *imprisoned* or petrified, ready for instant release by Zhentarim mages if anyone ever slays or circumvents the dragon.

Zhentarim caravans coming west either traverse the entire pass to join the trade road just south of Hill's Edge, or turn north at the headwaters of the River Reaching, to descend, alongside the spectacular series of falls there known as The Misty Stair.

Explorers—and patrols from Hill's Edge—are kept away from the caravan route in this area by the monsters of Skull Gorge, all summoned by watchful Zhentarim mages (although they conceal this so the legend of "haunted" Skull Gorge can grow).

Zhentarim caravans head north under escort from Darkhold, protected from most scrutiny or brigandry by the presence of roaming orc raiding bands in the pay of the Zhentarim.

At The Hill of Lost Souls such caravans either turn southwest to join the trade roads, or continue northward to Llorkh, where a Zhentarim mage, Geildarr, recently seized the lordship by murdering the incumbent. From there the caravans go to Loudwater.

From Loudwater, barges on the River Shining carry the Zhent wagons to Secomber or Daggerford, where they take to the roads again or load their cargos onto ships. In either case, the goods enter the general flow of Sword Coast North merchant traffic.

This awesomely expensive, long trade route is economical only because exclusive access to Anauroch, the Stonelands, and Yellow Snake Pass make it shorter and faster than the routes others use to ship goods to and from the Dragon Reach area.

All this may seem to have little to do with the powerful magic of evil Zhentarim wizards, but it is the main source of the daily wealth of the Zhentarim. Their other sources of income are the mines they control in Thar, and their small slave trade.

Zhentarim slaving is mainly kidnapping done for hire. The Zhentarim accept contracts to remove certain persons—heirs, for example, or rivals in love or trade. These victims are given into the cruel clutches of the drow, or transported halfway across Faerun and then sold. In the surface world, Zhentarim slavers sell their wares to rich and unscrupulous Calishites, who need road-cutters, loggers, and miners in the jungles of Chult; to evil sea-captains running short of rowing slaves; and to anyone waging war who needs fresh swords to die for the cause.

Space runs short again. Next time, we'll finish with grand Zhentarim schemes, and return to the darker corners of Zhentil Keep.

Elminster tells me there seems to be a new fashion in the cities of the Dragon reach: ladies in formal gowns have taken to wearing jewelled, daintily-crafted metal gauntlets to feasts.

❑

The Living Galaxy

Reshaping History For Fun And Games

by Roger E. Moore

Think for a moment, as millions of people have certainly done since the passing of the year 1945, about what the world would be like now if the Axis powers had won the Second World War. Let's be more specific, however, and have you think about what *you and your hometown* would be like had the Axis won. What would you be taught in school? To what nation would you owe allegiance? Where would you work? What would you believe? How different would *you* be?

What if the Confederate States of America had won its independence? How would that have affected you now? And what if the United States of America had *not* won its independence from Great Britain? What if diseases carried by Native Americans had killed off the European colonists, instead of vice versa? What if the Black Death had been more lethal? What if the Roman Empire had remained whole?

If you are interested in exploring these questions, a number of science fiction and science fantasy role playing games are available to give you and your friends insight into the world of alternate histories. This subgenre of science fiction has for years produced striking stories of "what if?" This column will explore these "what if?" worlds and how you can create them in your own time-travel or alternate-universe RPG.

The Times They Are A-Changin'

Creating an alternate world is very easy: You go back in time and change an event—a big thing or a small thing—then come forward in time and see the results of your meddling. (Well, yes, there *are* a few bugs to be worked out in the time-travel department.)

Going to an alternate universe in gaming is even easier: You roll a few dice, and there you are. Making up the details of that new world, however, is very difficult if the game doesn't come with the outline of what that new world is like. If you read a lot of alternate-history science fiction, you are aware that no two stories agree on the possible effects of a Southern victory in the American Civil War, for instance. As the game master, you have the freedom to create whatever outcome you like. The work required to detail a new world to place an adventure there, however, can be daunting. You definitely need to know a good bit of history to make an altered world look real to the players, who might ask pointed questions, such as why Sir Winston Churchill isn't present in your world's timeline. (Of course, you can always bluff your way out, but knowing history makes your bluffs a lot better: "Umm, the newspapers you found in the British Museum indicate that he was killed in the Boer War.")

Several RPGs, particularly Tri-Tac's *Fringeworthy,* 54°40′ Orphyte's *Timemaster*, Steve Jackson Games's *GURPS Time Travel,* and BTRC's *TimeLords* games, allow for the presence of Earths in which events did not come out as they have now. Steve Jackson Games's *GURPS* system, using the *GURPS Time Travel* rules at the core, is particularly good for setting up alternate-world adventures, thanks to its many booklets detailing historical periods and gaming genres.

However, any time-travel game can be modified to include alternate worlds. All you need to do is to make up a few brief notes on how these worlds are accessed, as well as making up these new worlds themselves. In fact, with a little more work, any modern-era warfare or espionage system can be modified in this manner. Agents from TSR's TOP SECRET/S.I.™ game or The Avalon Hill Game Company's *James Bond 007* system, for example, might discover a secret laboratory where drugs, psychic powers, machinery, an alien artifact, magic, or other means were being used to explore alternate times, perhaps in search of new resources or even to bring back devices to be used in subjugating the agents' home Earth.

Military officers in GDW's *Dark Conspiracy, Twilight: 2000,* or *Merc: 2000* games might find an island where an interdimensional gateway exists, much as in the *Fringeworthy* game. You as the GM need not bother with all the precise details on how such a method works any more than the GM of an interstellar science fiction campaign needs to detail how an interstellar-drive engine works. All you need to do is set up a consistent and playable system to make the transfer workable in gaming.

Alternate "what if?" worlds are a standard feature of some super-hero role playing games, particularly TSR's MARVEL SUPER HEROES (MSH) and ICE's *Champions* games. Marvel Comics even has a comics series called *What If?*, which centers around the actions and lives of the heroes, had some event had turned out differently (see the MSH module, *The Gates of What If?,* as an example). The *Champions* game provides an excellent sourcebook called *Champions 3-D*, covering alternate timelines and adventure plots.

Whether the heroes in your campaign are fairly normal or super-powered, time travel will pose a terrible threat to them and their world. A mad scientist, world conqueror, or other villain might deliberately travel back in time to alter the history of the world to his advantage, leaving only a handful of heroes who somehow escape the alteration's effects to go after him and reverse the damage done to the timeline. (This is the driving plot behind the *Timemaster* game, in which an alien race is messing with our history.) For a kinky scenario, assume that the heroes did *not* escape the effects of the time alteration, but they still exist in the altered, conquered world and have found the means to travel back in their own timeline to undo the villain's deeds—if they can!

Combining time travel with alternate universes means that heroes can explore timelines in which the Soviet Union still exists in the year 2051, or in which all of America north of Mexico consists of British colonies in 1913. GDW's *Twilight: 2000* world, for instance, could exist on an alternate timeline. Even peculiar science-fantasy worlds, such as Earth in GDW's *Space: 1889* game, can be opened for exploration. It's a rich field for gaming.

But how do you start?

Time Management And You

Creating an alternate history for Earth takes a lot of work. Even if you are borrowing the basic plan for your world from one of the many science fiction novels or stories about them, you've still got a lot to do to flesh out specific adventures and settings. Ward Moore's *Bring the Jubilee* is one of the most realistic and detailed of all alternate-history tales, depicting a vastly changed world after Confederate independence in the Civil War, but a GM using it would still need to cull scraps of information on the world from its pages and fill in the missing spots. If you want a good place to start, I'd recommend using this book.

If you're creating the world on your own, you've really got some work to do. The further back in time you make the original alteration—say, if the Chinese had colonized North America before the Europeans got there—the more history and other references you will have to read to make reasonable projections about how things could have turned out. (Then, too, the further back you make an alteration, the more different the resulting world is likely to be.) If the change is fairly recent—say, with the last American presidential election—you have fewer things to worry about, though you'll still need to be caught up on current events and history.

My basic advice, then, is to not go too far back in history unless you *love* to do historical research (you'll be doing enough of it as is). Maybe it's easier for your players' characters to travel to worlds that aren't much different from our own. If you want something *really* different, just prepare yourself for a few evenings in the local library. Given the above example about the Chinese colonization of America, you might wish to research Chinese history and figure out when a colonization effort to North America would have been most likely, then study world history more broadly to add in the effects of the missing pieces: the rise of Mayan, Aztec, and Incan civilizations; any wars, revolutions, and changes in government involving China; the influence of Japan, Korea, and Southeast Asia; etc. There are even some science fiction stories on this theme to help.

This seems daunting, but the truth is that you don't have to know everything. Few adventures in role playing are going to span a whole globe, and there are many ways to restrict the movements of the player characters so that they don't happen to visit Australia when you have no notes worked out for that continent's history. Besides, you have the freedom as the GM to make things up as you go along, fleshing out your world during game play with your own ideas.

Because of the research involved, an alternate-worlds campaign might work best as an off-and-on affair, run either as a sidelight to an entirely different sort of role playing campaign or else broken up by games run by other people, allowing the GM time to do the necessary background work and write up the adventure. It is likely that most gamers will dabble with alternate worlds once in a while as a break from their regular set-up, but careful work on the part of the GM can make this break a memorable one and have players asking for more.

Timely Tricks For Tricky GMs

There are several special techniques you can use as a GM when designing an alternate-history world. The first is to focus simply on the sequence of events following the change you propose to make. In short, you get to rewrite history, figuring out what would take place if this happened, what logically would transpire next, what would happen after that, etc. I call this the **if-then-then** technique, and it is carried out right up to the point where you feel a good stopping point can be found for an adventure.

As an example, let's pick a world in which Spain was better able, through luck and good military leadership, to keep from losing its New World territories. If the Spanish Armada of 1588 had been successful against the English fleet, England might not have become a major world power (we'll assume England was not conquered, but its fleet was badly damaged and Sir Francis Drake was killed).

The Americas from California to the Mississippi River (including the Caribbean and Florida) and south into South America would then be strengthened under Spanish rule. The American states, assuming they gained their independence, could not then expand westward beyond the Mississippi River.

Instead of an American Civil War in the mid-1800s, the pressures of "manifest destiny" (i.e., hunger for more land and resources) might then cause the fledgling United States to go to war with Spain on a broader scale than what actually happened in the war with Mexico (1846-1848), seeking the vast Spanish holdings in California, Mexico, and Florida. Would other countries in Europe ally with America in the war? You decide.

I also leave for you to decide how slavery (opposed by Spain but supported by some Americans), religion (Spain was Catholic, and America largely Protestant), democracy (supported by America but opposed by Spain), and other issues affect the situation.

We can set the time for an adventure at 1848, in the midst of the war, so the setting provides plenty of conflict and intrigue. We could have also made some more suppositions and set the adventure instead in 1993, with a powerful Mexico taking up what is now Central America, California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas, working with a U.S.A. that includes all of Canada (Britain couldn't hold on to that, either, in the end).

After playing the "if-then-then" game, you next turn to the **big picture** technique and map out the world. This gives you the current geographic after effects of your change to history. Your most basic equipment in mapping out an alternate world would be the usual huge amounts of paper and pencils that all GMs need, a decent library, and (most importantly) a stack of photocopied world maps. If possible, make copies of world maps showing all major land features, with past or present national boundaries sketched in lightly. Use these maps to draw out the political features of your new world. Study in particular maps of the world in the year in which history changed in your scenario.

If you are drawing out Europe in 1950 under the Nazis, you should check World War II-era maps of Europe for countries that existed then, such as the Nazi puppet state of Croatia, and keep them in mind. The naming of names is very important at this stage, so have lots of ideas ready. The world map is not something you would pass out to players as they enter your new world, but they might be able to obtain rough copies of it from cartographers or libraries if they are clever.

One good (if limited) source of maps for alternate worlds comes from hex-grid boardgame maps. A number of games have been designed around the

premise that Nazi Germany won the Second World War or the South won the American Civil War, and you borrow your world situation from them. I particularly recommend a look at *Tomorrow the World*, a board game from 3W (Cambria, Calif.), in which World War III is played out by the triumphant Third Reich and Japanese Empire in 1948. This game's background is carefully worked out and is particularly frightening to read. XTR Corporation (San Luis Obispo, Calif.) has two similar board games: *Mississippi Banzai* (much like the previous game) and *NATO, Nukes & Nazis*, in which World War III is fought in 1992 between the Third Reich and those western democracies that survived the war.

You should strongly consider, too, the wealth of "standard" World War III games involving NATO and the Warsaw Pact forces through the 1970s and 1980s. The now-defunct SPI games company published many "what if?" war simulations, such as *The East is Red* (a Sino-Soviet war), *Seelöwe* (German invasion of Britain in 1940), *Operation Olympic* (American invasion of Japan in 1945), and *Invasion: America* (Communist forces invade North America). Many hypothetical conflict games appeared in SPI's (later TSR's) *Strategy & Tactics* Magazine. (Last note: SPI's *Dixie,* about a second American Civil War in the 1930s, might be useful though I've heard the game itself is terrible).

A third helpful technique for world creation can be borrowed from the fantasy RPG literature—in particular, from an article that appeared in this very newszine many years ago, by E. Gary Gygax: "Notes for the Dungeon Master," in POLYHEDRON® Newszine #12 (pages 16-17). Here, he describes the **bullseye** method by which he designed the WORLD OF GREYHAWK® setting for the AD&D® game. This system is adapted for alternate-world building:

1. First, get a firm mental picture of the sort of world you want for the scenario. Briefly describe the major nations: their rulers, political structure, military, religions, social issues, technological development, resources, economies, relations with other nations, etc. For ease of reference, we can assume that the physical parameters of the world—the geographic features, climate and weather, etc.—are the same all over.

2. Close in on the area where you want the majority of the adventure to take place. Ignoring the rest of the world for the most part, select the relevant continent or other large geographical area and there increase the level of detail. For example, you could list all the nations in that area, with notes on their relative populations, allies and enemies, history, economic problems, major cities and military bases, points of interest, recent wars, and so forth. Keep your timeline and a history book or two at hand to figure out some of the tricky parts, such as when Canada was named and how, etc.

3. Focus further on the main adventuring site. Select one nation and detail it even further: major cities, ethnic groups, political concerns, history, important figures, etc. As before, close in on the area where most of the adventure will be taking place.

4. Select a state, province, or other smaller area within the chosen nation, and detail it. Unless regional differences are great, you need not spend a lot of time here.

5. Finally, pick the main adventuring sites in this area and give them the level of detail needed to make them as realistic as possible. Here, you want to figure out the local cities, weather, peoples, attitudes, the sights and sounds and smells of the locale, everything you can find to bring it to rich life.

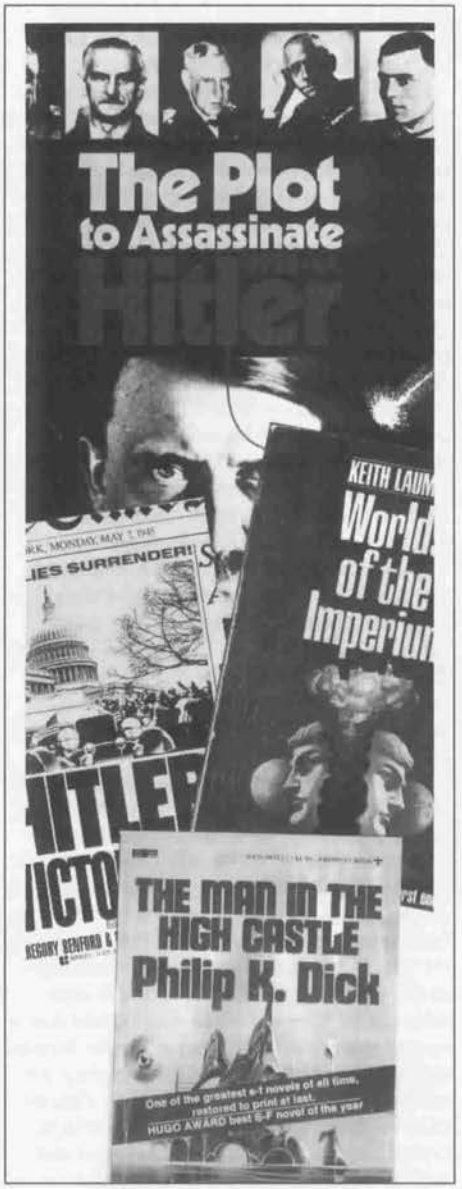
The advantage to the bullseye method is that if the setting for the adventure has to change to an area you haven't planned out, you still have a framework in which to draw out the setting and make it consistent with what you've already developed.

Overall, one especially effective trick is to base the adventure in the same area where the heroes started, so the impact of the change becomes more sharply defined (the **hometown** effect). Even better, set the entire adventure in the same area where you and the other gamers live. What would San Francisco look like in different timelines? New York? Chicago? London? Montreal? As the GM, you'll show the way.

These four basic techniques should help you greatly in your quest to produce a brave, new world for the players' heroes to explore. The above structure, of course, begs only one question: What's there to do?

Making The Time Count

I believe that any adventure you run on an alternate world should strongly reflect the peculiar nature of that world.


The Plot to Assassinate Hitler
KEITH LAUM
World of the Imperium
THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE
Philip K. Dick
One of the greatest s-f novels of all time, restored to print at last.
HUGO AWARD best S-F novel of the year

This will make the adventure all the more memorable for the players and for you, locking it into their minds as a logical outgrowth of the world's history. You don't want to run a simple treasure hunt or murder mystery in which the people of this new world seem no different from people you meet in our own world. You want to infect the players with that most special of sensations: a feeling of wonder. You want them to marvel at this world and its ways, in all its bizarre, terrible, or wonderful glory.

Example 1: An alternate world in which the Vikings settled North America long before the rest of Europe got there would be an interesting place, but the effect will be lost on your players

unless the adventure involves major elements of that altered history. Let's play with history a bit first.

Say, for example, that the Vikings set up colonies around the coasts and Great Lakes, then made their way as far west as the Rockies, warring with the Native Americans at times but also living in peace with them in other places. Viking ships cruise up and down the eastern seaboard, and dozens of colonies have been founded. Viking Christianity mingles with native "Vinland" beliefs, producing several unusual religions. Europe is vaguely aware that North America is there (the Vikings aren't good at correspondence), but until the Renaissance little is done about it. Long about 1492 or so, three small ships sail into the Caribbean and discover a Vinland colony. Will the appearance of Columbus mean war? Will the descendants of the Vikings raid those ships? Will the coming of the Vikings have long ago allowed the Indians to adapt to European diseases, saving them from the devastating plagues of our own timeline? Now is a good time for an adventure to occur!

Obviously, the adventure should take place somewhere in or around this altered continent of Vinland, possibly either in an odd town with Scandinavian temples and Indian lodges scattered about, or in the Caribbean when Columbus appears. Horses and cattle brought by the Norsemen would be commonly seen, owned by Indians and Vikings alike. The Great Lakes might become a major center of civilization, with farms, mines, and trading ports springing up all over. All sorts of interesting characters suggest themselves, from jarls to tribal chiefs, shipmasters to overland explorers, churchmen to shamans.

As the GM for this scenario, you should study the history and geography of pre-Columbian America, the habits and cultures of Native Americans and Vikings of the 11th century, and European history from 1000-1500 A.D. If you decide that not much of the rest of the world (aside from America) would be affected by the Viking colonization, you could draw out a map of North America around 1492 in this timeline, placing the major nations, cities, and tribal areas (large nations might be unlikely, with small settlements and forts being the norm). If the Columbus angle grabs you, you could focus on the Caribbean, noting the major islands, their pre-Columbian populations, and the "new" Viking settlements and political divisions, as well as the new cultures at work in this world. Finally, diagrams of the *Nina, Pinta,* and *Santa Maria*, along with a map of the island where Columbus will first meet the Vinlanders, can be made using history texts.

What about the adventure could make it really distinctive, however? If the Columbus angle is ignored for the moment, perhaps the PCs were sent to this world to collect something of value here: cultural information, samples of wildlife extinct on other worlds, and so on. The PCs might be descended from Norse or Indian ancestors, and so have a wish to establish their own trans-temporal homes and estates here.

Because Vinland is relatively low-tech, unscrupulous corporations or governments with access to transuniversal travel might want to exploit the natural resources here, perhaps even setting up colonies of their own at the Vinlanders' expense. If the PCs came to simply observe, they might become caught up in a brewing war between two cities on the Great Lakes, whose ships have been raiding each other's coasts.

But let's go back a moment. What if the early arrival of the Vikings, with their host of European diseases, allowed later generations of Native Americans to gain great resistance to infection? After the first spreading of disease, the Indians might become immune to smallpox and the like, and would recover their population losses in time for the coming of the rest of the Europeans in 1492. Perhaps some tribes would develop remarkable antibodies in their systems that would be of interest to medical scientists on other worlds—if you could somehow talk a native out of parting with some of his blood!

Columbus is still a tempting tidbit. If the adventure involved having the PCs meet Columbus and his crew (looking much as they did in our real world), you might give the PCs the mission of seeing that peace is made between the Europeans and the Vinlanders. Or the PCs might be charged with making sure Columbus gets a false picture of things in the New World, so that when he returns to Spain no huge wave of settlers and conquerors will threaten the lands. The players might even have their own ideas on what to do if they access this alternate world on their own, without mission orders. In some ways, this last scenario could be the most fun and challenging.

Example 2: Suppose that you are running a *Fringeworthy* campaign, and you decide to create a world where the U.S. and the Soviet Union went to war during the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962. A bumper crop of news stories and television features appeared in October 1992, the 30th anniversary of that dreadful time, and the GM would do well to get copies of the articles by searching the library's *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature* under topic headings like "Kennedy," "Castro," "Cuba," etc.

A number of books have been written about that time as well, and the GM should also study the turns of history after that time to figure out how the rest of the world might have been involved had war broken out. Again, not every country needs to be accounted for, but the effects on the major ones should be noted, even if briefly.

We construct the following sequence of events for this world, which has a history like our own up to October 1962. The go-ahead is given to invade Cuba; the Soviet commander there has atomic weapons fired at the American naval fleet; nukes are exchanged worldwide, and war breaks out across Europe and the Caribbean. Cuba is conquered and devastated. Europe is badly battered; New York and Washington, D.C. (and a number of ICBM, Air Force, and naval bases) are bombed. The Soviet Union surrenders in 1963, horrifyingly ravaged by atomic warfare. Kennedy is reelected in 1964. The West, its economy and industry crippled by World War III, becomes stagnant as famine, riots, fuel shortages, radiation sickness, and war-born viruses sweep the lands.

The Far East now begins its slow rise to power in the vacuum left by the collapse of the Soviets and the damage done to America and Europe. China and Japan, though at odds with each other, come to dominate the Pacific and Asia. Japan takes the lead in high-tech manufacturing and opening new markets for its booming economy. Anti-American sentiment is strong in both nations as a result of the war, though Japan prefers to deal with the U.S. as its major market for goods.

In America, reaction to the war leads to partial nuclear disarmament and the banning of civilian nuclear power. Cubans barely recover from the war, but they cannot manage anything above a subsistence economy for years. Anti-Americanism spreads across Europe and the Caribbean (particularly on Cuba). China and fuel-hungry America compete for the attentions of the oil-rich

Arab states in the Middle East. In 1979, the Soviet Union falls into violent civil war that involves the use of atomic weapons on its own armies, then it fragments and collapses into complete ruin.

Given that 1993 is the 30th anniversary of the end of the Third World War, the GM sets the adventure in that year, on the island of Cuba, in the rebuilt city of Havana. The PCs might be sent here to acquire anti-radiation and anti-cancer drugs shipped here illegally from the U.S., medicine that's far more advanced on this world than elsewhere.

During their investigations, the PCs run into American CIA and drug agents, South American drug lords (the drug problem on this world is far worse than on our own, given the lawlessness of the time), Cuban nationalists wanting Americans to leave for good, peasant farmers who hoard food and snipe at American servicemen, and even a seedy arms merchant who offers to sell the PCs a missing atomic bomb from the war ("Never been used!"). Perhaps even a Chinese "trade mission" (in which everyone is a spy) will appear and take an interest in the PCs, not knowing them to be from another world. The PCs will long remember their visit to this battered, dangerous land.

Finding The Right Time

The following are some alternate-history and time-travel books that are recommended for your basic gaming library. Your best bets for finding some of these works (the ones that are out of print) would be to comb the science fiction sections of used-book stores, or (better yet) the shelves of book dealers at local science fiction and fantasy conventions.

Keep in mind, of course, that an alternate-world campaign easily can be built from mainstream and speculative novels in which major events in the current world came out differently. Political and military technothrillers are particularly good for this (e.g., Tom Clancy's *Red Storm Rising*,, Larry Bond's *Vortex*, and *Red Phoenix*, Dale Brown's *Flight of the Old Dog* and *Silver Tower*, Stephen Coonts's *Under Siege*, or Clive Cussler's *Cyclops* and *Raise the Titanic!*).

Also of interest are the many World War III novels that appeared in the 1950s through the 1980s, such as Nevil Shute's *On the Beach*, Pat Frank's *Alas, Babylon*, Philip Wylie's *Tomorrow!* and *Triumph*, Alfred Coppel's *Dark December*, and *Warday*, by Whitley Strieber and James Kunetka (among many others equally depressing).

Adams, Robert. *Alternatives.*
Amis, Kingsley. *The Alteration.*
Anderson, Poul. *Guardians of Time.*
Benford, Gregory. *Timescape.*
Benford, Gregory, and Martin H. Greenberg (ed.). *Hitler Victorious; What Might Have Been, Volume 1: Alternate Empires; What Might Have Been, Volume 2: Alternate Heroes; What Might Have Been, Volume 3: Alternate Wars; What Might Have Been, Volume 4: Alternate Americas.*
Boyd, John. *The Last Starship From Earth.*
Brunner, John. *Times Without Number.*
Card, Orson Scott. *Seventh Son, Alvin Prentice*, and *Red Prophet.*
Clark, Ronald W. *Queen Victoria's Bomb* and *The Bomb That Failed.*
Coppel, Alfred. *The Burning Mountain.*
Davidson, Avram. *Masters of the Maze.*
de Camp, L. Sprague. *Lest Darkness Fall* and "The Wheels of If."
Deighton, Len. *SS GB.*
Dick, Philip K. *The Man in the High Castle.*
Eklund, Gordon. *All Times Possible* and *Serving in Time.*
Farmer, Philip José. *Two Hawks From Earth.*
Finney, Jack. *Time And Again.*
Garrett, Randall. *Murder and Magic* and other Lord Darcy books.
Gibson, William, and Bruce Sterling. *The Difference Engine.*
Harrison, Harry. *A Transatlantic Tunnel, Hurrah!*
Hersey, John. *White Lotus.*
Hogan, James P. *The Proteus Operation.*
Jones, Douglas. *The Court Martial of George Armstrong Custer.*
Kantor, MacKinlay. *If the South Had Won the Civil War.*
Kube-McDowell, Michael P. *Alternities.*
Laumer, Keith. *Worlds of the Imperium.*
L'Engle, Madeleine. *A Swiftly Tilting Planet.*
Lewis, Sinclair. *It Can't Happen Here.*
Linaweaver, Brad. *Moon of Ice.*
McSherry, Frank, Jr., and S. M. Stirling (ed.). *The Fantastic Civil War* and *The Fantastic World War II.*
Moore, Ward. *Bring the Jubilee.*
Nabokov, Vladimir. *Ada.*
Peirce, Hayford. *Napoleon Disentimed.*
Piper, H. Beam. *Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen.*
Poyer, David C. *The Shiloh Project.*
Resnick, Mike (ed.). *Alternate Kennedys* and *Alternate Presidents.*
Robert, Keith. *Pavane.*
Silverberg, Robert. *Gate of Worlds* and *Up the Line.*
Spinrad, Norman. *The Iron Dream.*
Watt-Evans, Lawrence. *Crosstime Traffic.*
Westheimer, David. *Lighter than a Feather* (also titled *Downfall.*)

These are only a few of the many alternate histories on the bookshelves. New worlds are being created all the time, and you would be wise to check the science fiction section of your local Waldenbooks, B. Dalton's, or other bookstore.

There are also a few scholarly write-ups of how things might have turned out, mostly concerned with World War II. Military historians and retired generals have written books and papers about what might have happened if the Germans had invaded Britain in Operation Sealion, or if America had invaded Japan in Operation Olympic or Coronet instead of dropping the atomic bomb. (For the former, see Richard Cox's *Operation Sealion*, Norman Longmate's *If Britain Had Fallen*, and Kenneth Macksey's *Invasion: The German Invasion of England, July 1940.*) Lots of people have speculated about what would have happened if we'd gone on to Baghdad at the end of the Persian Gulf War, or if we'd used atomic weapons during the Vietnam War. You can use their thoughts to build your own brave, new world.

If you are mostly interested in changing the outcome of things in America, you might do well to get a handy pocket reference like Gorton Carruth's *What Happened When*, a thick but enjoyable paperback taking things from about the year A.D. 1000 to 1988. You get a much better picture of how events interrelate and how one thing leads to another.

Next month: another dive into the sea of science fiction gaming. Enjoy.

Into The Dark

More Special Deliveries

by James Lowder

The thing I enjoy most about writing *Into the Dark*—apart from arguing with Jean and Skip about deadlines—is getting mail from fellow movie hounds. For this month's column, I revved up the VCR to run videos suggested by Clifford Matheson, Justin Somma, Eric Francis, and champion correspondent James Buchanan.

In putting together a reader-request column like this one, I try to cover at least one video from each letter that makes its way to my mailbox. Sometimes that's easier said than done, though. If a movie hasn't been released on VHS or laser disk, it may be impossible for me to view. Keep that in mind when you drop me a recommendation. You'll also improve your chances of getting your name in the next request column if you suggest more than one film or suggest a gem (or dog) I haven't seen.

You can't get any better *****
Entertaining and enjoyable ****
There are worse films ***
Wait for cable **
A waste of good tape *

The Blood of Heroes

1990, 97 Minutes
New Line/HBO
Director: David Peoples
Cast: Rutger Hauer, Joan Chen
***1/2

I wasn't expecting much from *The Blood of Heroes* after scanning the box at the local video chain megastore. Seemed like just another post-apocalypse grunt and sweat epic, with lots of violence and no plot. My mistake.

In fact, *The Blood of Heroes* spins an interesting tale, with a solid cast and a compelling storyline. Oh, the post-apocalypse cliches are here in abundance: people dressed in motley collections of rags and body armor, rural towns that resemble junkyards, big cities filled with decadent rich folks, and so on. Fortunately, all that grimness is relegated to the background, with the heroes' quest and their interaction as characters placed rightfully in the fore.

Sallow (Rutger Hauer) leads a team of juggers, itinerant athletes who travel from town to grimy little town playing "the Game." The competition involves two heavily armed and armored squads squaring off on a short field. Each team consists of five members: four bruisers and one lithe runner-type called a Qwik. As the bulkier athletes beat each other silly, the opposing Qwiks slug it out over a dog's skull, the object of the bloodshed being to spike the skull onto the other team's goal.

When his Qwik is crippled, Sallow finds himself training an inexperienced—but exceedingly talented—young woman named Kidda (Joan Chen). She revitalizes the team, and they begin to dream of breaking into the big time, the professional jugger league in Red City. Yet, the drunken, bitter Sallow knows that such challenges are rarely successful; more often than not, they prove deadly for the inexperienced team. Sallow was once a pro, it seems, though he lost his status because of an affair with one of the rich women who patronize the sport in Red City.

As you might expect, this all leads up to an epic battle in the Red City arena, with Sallow, Kidda, and company facing off against a pro squad (including, of course, one of Sallow's old teammates). The overlords who banished Sallow from the pros are dragged into the plot.

Sadly, after an hour of tight plotting and solid characterization, director Peoples seems to forget that the final match has more riding on it than who wins or loses. Sure, the outcome of the challenge is important, but it doesn't clearly resolve Sallow's old feuds or the interesting class struggle theme introduced in the movie's last act.

Despite the stumbling conclusion and some confusing filming during the last combat, I can still recommend *The Blood of Heroes*—but only tentatively. The film will certainly pull you into the wasteland drawn up expertly in the movie's exciting first hour. If you're like me, though, you'll feel like you've been abandoned there when the end credits roll and nothing's been resolved but the score of the final match.

Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves

1991, 144 Minutes
Warner
Director: Kevin Reynolds
Cast: Kevin Costner, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, Morgan Freeman, Alan Rickman
*

Usually a film has to have a tiny budget to stink badly on every level. Not *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves.* It manages to be an utter waste of time, even after the billion simoleans blown on lavish production values and an all-star cast.

The year is 1194, and the Third Crusade is going badly for young Robin of Locksley. He finds himself a prisoner in a Moorish jail. Being the hero of this epic, though, he manages an exciting escape, during which a Moorish warrior, Azeem (Morgan Freeman), swears to protect him from all harm. At this point, the film begins a long, tedious spiral into ridiculousness.

After this well-staged opening, a somewhat traditional version of the Robin Hood legend is played out. Robin returns from the Crusades to find his father dead, his lands stolen by the villainous sheriff of Nottingham. Robin becomes an outlaw and joins up with a group of outlaws in Sherwood Forest, stealing from the rich and giving to the poor. He also fights the sheriff's nefarious plan to usurp the throne of King Richard I, who has managed to get himself made prisoner in the Holy Land.

In addition to the standard romantic subplot involving Maid Marian, Reynolds adds a basketful of themes and plot twists. The sheriff, it seems, is a devil-worshiping madman who keeps a witch in his basement. Then there's the rivalry between Robin and Will Scarlet, the melodramatic rift between Robin and his father, and so on.

Most of these subplots and themes are left dangling at one point or another, as the writers heap on new twists to keep the audience from snoring too loudly. Some of the themes are never resolved. The most obvious and infuriating of these is the class struggle argument between Robin and Will Scarlet (Christian Slater). The filmmakers side philo-

sophically with Robin, who claims that nobility is not a birthright, but defined by one's actions. The actual story says otherwise, as time and again Robin claims to be smarter, more talented, and more worthy to lead than everyone else around him. He's never really questioned on this because he's a noble's son and he's Kevin Costner.

As for the rest of the film—where can I begin to criticize a bloated mess like this? There's the cacophony of inappropriate dialects and accents, the misfired humor, and the astoundingly dull fight scenes. Of course the most obvious pile of dung in this overripe field is Alan Rickman's sheriff, which is little more than a ridiculous parody of Snidely Whiplash. The real blame for this particular failure lies with the director. Rickman plays the goofy, over-the-top bad guy well, and taken on its own, his performance might be amusing. But the character doesn't work as the primary foil for Costner's straight-laced Robin Hood.

Oh, a few bits of *Prince of Thieves* are entertaining. The scene where Robin first looks through Azeem's spyglass is clever. Brian Blessed is cool as Robin's doomed father, and all the scenes with Guy of Gisburne are slick. It's telling that both these characters die quickly.

If Azeem was a better guardian angel, he would have stopped the film after the jailbreak. He could have saved Robin—and everyone who watches this dog—a whole lot of strife.

The Guyver

1991, 88 Minutes
New Line/Imperial
Director: Screaming Mad George and Steve Wang
Cast: Jack Armstrong, Vivian Wu, Mark Hamill, David Gale
****1/2**

The Guyver is based on Yoshiki Takaya's manga series "Bio Booster Armored Guyver," which has also spawned an animated series from Japan's Bandai studio. In this thoroughly Americanized version, all around nice guy Sean (Jack Armstrong) discovers a suit of alien super-armor—known as the Guyver—and accidentally activates it. This brings him to the attention of good-guy CIA agent Max Reed (Mark Hamill) and bad-guy corporate slime Vaulkas (*Re-Animator*'s David Gale).

Most of the movie centers around badly lit "action" scenes. At first, Sean and his pals run from Vaulkas's mutant minions (called Zoanoids). Then he activates the Guyver suit and beats the tar out of them in endless Zoanoid-fu sequences. These hyper battles are entertaining enough, though I'd much prefer a Jackie Chan film any day.

The myriad cameos are the best part of *The Guyver.* Typecast scream queen Linnea Quigley plays, you guessed it, a scream queen whose horror movie shoot is interrupted by one of the Zoanoids (Jimmy "Dy-no-mite" Walker in a rubber monster suit). The always-entertaining Jeffrey Combs—Dr. West of *Re-Animator* fame—finds himself cast as a mad scientist named Dr. East here. These fun bits might keep you awake if you don't enjoy watching guys in monster costumes being tossed around.

The Flight of Dragons

1984, 98 Minutes
Rankin-Bass
Director: Arthur Rankin, Jr. and Jules Bass
Cast: Voices of John Ritter, Henry Morgan, James Earl Jones
******

Despite what some movie review guides say, *The Flight of Dragons* was filmed with traditional cell animation, not stop motion. It's pretty standard Rankin-Bass fare, about on par with the work they did on *The Hobbit.*

The story is based in part on a Peter Dickinson book, part on Gordon Dickson's *The Dragon and the George.* It tells of the plight of the Green Wizard (voice of Henry Morgan), who sees magic's doom in the growth of human technology. He wants to set up a hidden realm to serve as the last bastion for the world's enchanted creatures. Two of his three brothers, good wizards like him, offer to help in the realm's creation. The evil Red Wizard (James Earl Jones) refuses. He will foster mankind's use of technology, since that will lead to its eventual self-destruction.

To foil the Red Wizard, the Green Wizard pulls a hero from the future, a science buff and board game designer (John Ritter) to steal the Red Crown of Omidan from the bad guy. What follows is a very standard fantasy quest tale, as a wood elf, a gallant knight, a young dragon, and other assorted characters band together as an unlikely group of heroes.

There are some entertaining segments, like the battle with the giant, peglegged ogre, but for the most part *The Flight of Dragons* is extremely derivative, with obvious swipes from Tolkien and *The Wizard of Oz.* Younger kids might find it less tedious than genre veterans, but most POLYHEDRON® Newszine readers will find it pretty dull.

The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms

1953, 80 Minutes
Warner
Director: Eugene Lourie
Cast: Paul Christian, Paula Raymond, Cecil Kellaway
******1/2**

An atom bomb test in the Arctic Circle provides the wake-up call for a rhedosaurus. The creature then wanders down the Atlantic Coast, letting everyone know that the reports of dinosaurs' total extinction are decidedly exaggerated. Radiation expert Dr. Tom Nesbitt (Paul Christian) teams up with paleontologist Dr. Thurgood Elson (Cecil Kellway) and his beautiful assistant (Paula Raymond). Together they track the rhedosaurus and develop a strategy for defeating the rampaging beast.

The plot and the characters should sound familiar to you, even if you haven't seen *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms.* It's a template of sorts, copied and recopied by almost every creature-on-the-loose film. The stand-by characters are pretty effective here, though Cecil Kellaway steals the show from the younger heroes as the likeable old paleontologist who takes one too many dives in his bathysphere.

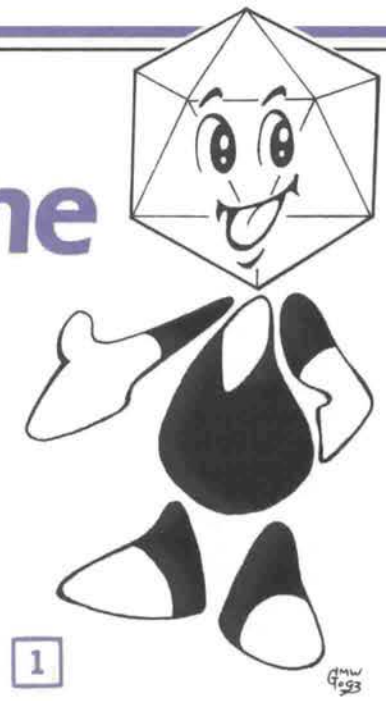
Of course, the real star of the film is Ray Harryhausen's stop-motion monster. The rhedosaurus trashes ships, lighthouses, and parts of New York with ferocious glee. And the finale, with the monster thrashing around a burning Coney Island, is simply fantastic (laser disk aficionados can freeze frame during this sequence and witness the roller coaster fly apart board by board). Watch for Lee Van Cleef as the army sharpshooter in the Coney Island scene. ❑

What's In A Name

Help Choose A Network Mascot

Artist Gary M. Williams rendered these drawings of charming creatures that might grace future Network publications, and might even make cameo appearances in Network tournaments as friends, foes, or informants to the PCs.

This issue's contest calls on the membership not only to select a mascot, but to name it as well.



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Rules

Send HQ a postcard with the number of the creature you like and the name you are proposing for it. The creature with the winning name becomes the mascot. Postcards must be typed or printed in ink. You can enter as many times as you wish, but you can make only one entry per postcard. The card also must include your name, address, and membership number.

All entries immediately become property of the RPGA® Network and cannot be returned.

Entries must be postmarked no later than September 1st, 1993 and received at HQ by September 15th, 1993.

2

Prizes

A panel of judges selected by the HQ staff will pick 10 finalists from all entries received. Finalists will be selected on the basis of creativity, originality, and appropriateness to the creature named. Each member who has submitted a finalist will receive a one-year membership extension. A member can win only one extension. In the event that a single member submits more than one finalist, the remaining extensions will be awarded by a random drawing from the non-finalist entries.

In addition, the member who submits the winning entry will receive mention in the POLYHEDRON® Newszine and a nifty prize selected by HQ.

There you go, nice and simple. Good luck.

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Beaming Into MECCA

Star Trek Author Gene DeWeese Is Featured At The Game Fair

by Erlene Mooney

Science fiction plays a big part in this year's GEN CON® Game Fair, set for August 19-22 in Milwaukee, WI. Convention organizers have devoted an entire day to the genre, dubbing it Science Fiction Saturday.

The events include official Network tournaments for the Star Wars system, BUCK ROGERS™ Adventure game, and AMAZING ENGINE™ game; Star Fleet Battles and Star Fleet Missions; Star Trek Feud and trivia challenges; starship models on display; science fiction masterpieces hanging in the art show; and much more.

A highlight of Science Fiction Saturday is an appearance by Gene DeWeese, the best-selling author of Star Trek and Star Trek: The Next Generation books.

DeWeese will be on hand to meet with fans, sign autographs, and discuss science fiction writing. The author of more than three dozen books, he has a wealth of experiences to share.

DeWeese's first Star Trek novel was *Chain of Attack,* which he sold on the basis of a 50-page writing sample and an outline. "It was a long, involved procedure," he recalls. "I started the proposal in 1982. Pocket lost the manuscript and I resubmitted it a couple of times."

Pocket Books editor Dave Stern purchased DeWeese's book in 1986, and it made the New York Times Best Seller's List. DeWeese went on to write *The Final Nexus* and *Renegade,* also featuring the original crew, and *The Peacekeepers,* a Next Generation saga.

The Milwaukee resident also was instrumental in the best-seller *Probe,* which premiered as a hardcover book. DeWeese rewrote the book, originally penned by Margaret Bonanno. The book is a sequel to the movie, "Star Trek IV, The Voyage Home." While DeWeese's contributions made up 70% of *Probe,* he only was credited in the inside of the book.

Pocket editor John Ordover lauded DeWeese's efforts on the project, and said, "He's certainly one of our most popular authors."

DeWeese explained *Probe* came out several months later than originally planned because of all the changes Paramount wanted. "It was a huge shambles that ended up doing very well."

Since 1985 nearly all of the Star Trek paperbacks and hardbacks have appeared on the New York Times Best-Sellers List, DeWeese said, adding his own books total more than three months on the list.

DeWeese's four Star Trek novels have sold close to a million copies. "They keep selling year after year," he said. "Star Trek is such a cult. It's been building for 25 years."

The books are reprinted from time to time as a new crop of readers appears. For example, DeWeese said when *Chain of Attack* first came out on the shelves, it carried a cover price of $3.50. Now it costs $4.95.

He said he worries that perhaps there are too many Star Trek books being published. There are novels about the original crew, The Next Generation, and Deep Space Nine. "In one month last fall, five separate titles came out. I'm worried they'll do like the gothics and flood the market."

DeWeese is well-versed in the Star Trek universe. He keeps a tape library of all the episodes from each series. His involvement with Star Trek goes back to before the series aired.

At a World Science Fiction convention in 1966, prior to the release of the first episode, DeWeese sat in a lecture hall where Star Trek creator Gene Roddenberry was scheduled to speak.

"If there was any one single thing that kept Star Trek going through all these years, I think it was Roddenberry's appearance there."

DeWeese said a speaker preceded Roddenberry and touted how wonderful the Time Tunnel show would be. "He said this is a great TV show, and you Sci-Fi fans are going to love it. Saying "Sci-Fi" to people then was like calling a black man a nigger. He showed an episode and people were laughing at the wrong places. It didn't go over well. Then Roddenberry came on. He apologized in advance and said this was the best he could do given the restrictions. He said, "this was the best I could do, and this is it."

Roddenberry was warm, candid, and his series outlived him.

DeWeese said he became a fan of the show and participated in the letter-writing campaign to keep it on the air. He recalls sending 30 to 40 cards and letters.

Born in 1934 in Rochester, IN., DeWeese learned to appreciate science fiction when he was in grade school. He read E.E. "Doc" Smith books, Planet Comics, and Planet Stories magazine. In high school he wrote articles for the local newspaper.

"I always wanted to write science fiction," he said. "I've got boxes of everything I've written for amateur fanzines starting in 1950 or '51. I don't remember the name of the first article I wrote, but it was something to do with expansion. A man expanded out of this system and found that the stars were sub-atoms. He didn't live very long."

DeWeese went on to study at the Valparaiso Technical Institute in Indiana, Indiana University, and the University of Wisconsin and Marquette, both in Milwaukee. He worked as a technical writer at Delco Radio in Kokomo, IN and later at Delco Electronics in Milwaukee. There, he authored *Fundamentals of Space Navigation,* a 4-volume programmed text for NASA; *Fundamentals of Digital Computers,* and *Fundamentals of Integrated Circuits.* His other non-fiction works include *Making American Folk Art Dolls* and *Computers in Entertainment and the Arts.*

DeWeese became a full-time author in 1974. That year he received contracts for five books and asked for a leave of absence from Delco in Milwaukee. The company said no, so he left and started writing.

His more than three dozen novel writing credits include science fiction, horror, mystery, romantic suspense, and juvenile. Some of the titles include, *The Wanting Factor, Major Corby and the Unidentified Flapping Object, A Different Darkness, Charles Fort Never Mentioned Wombats, The Reimann Curse, Cave of the Moaning Wind, Nightmare in Pewter, Ginger's Wish,* and *Whatever Became of Aunt Margaret.*

Several of his books garnered him best novel awards from the Council for Wisconsin Writers.

His juvenile novel, *Adventures of a*

Two-Minute Mystery, was made into a two-part ABC Weekend Special in 1985 called "The Two-Minute Werewolf."

He has also rendered materials as a technical artist and has had several short stories published, including in AMAZING® Stories Magazine. His works have been translated in Japan, France, Argentina, Denmark, Italy, Holland, and Germany.

Several of his credits were collaborations under pseudonyms. For example, DeWeese and his friend Robert Coulson in Indiana co-authored two Man From U.N.C.L.E. books, *The Invisibility Affair* and *The Mind-Twisters Affair* under the name Thomas Stratton. The U.N.C.L.E. publisher said there wasn't room on the cover for two names, DeWeese recalled, so they created one using their middle names. *The Invisibility Affair* takes place in Milwaukee, where DeWeese placed an U.N.C.L.E. headquarters, and the second was set in Indiana. "Those books were fun, but they were difficult because we were 300 miles apart."

In 1985, TSR published one of his juvenile books, *Nightmare Universe.* "The heroine was an alien who was 6' tall, black, with bright red hair. When the hero said something she didn't like, she picked him up and threw him," he said.

DeWeese favors strong heroines. In his gothic (romantic suspense) books, his female characters are competent and often have careers. In one such book, a character is a computer instructor in Alaska. "She was the basis of the weirdest complaint I ever got," he said. "A reader said she was too competent. The reader was a woman." DeWeese added a lot of the gothic female characters are based on his wife, Beverly, a librarian.

Often people he knows end up in books, DeWeese explained. In the Star Trek novel *Nexus,* a commander is based on a now-retired instructor at the University of Wisconsin.

"I ran into her when I was starting the book, and the character popped into my head. The character eventually took over the book." The instructor was 80 years old and thinking about retiring, DeWeese said. However, once *Nexus* was published her students recognized her in the book and started calling her Commander Ansfield. They gave her a Star Trek commander's pin, and she began hearing from people she hadn't seen in years. She didn't retire until a year later, he added.

"Getting involved in Star Trek was a matter of inspiration," DeWeese said. "I'd been watching all of the episodes, and my agent said they were looking for book proposals." He currently has several proposals being reviewed by Pocket and hopes one is accepted soon. The Star Trek books are read more widely than his other works and people react to them more, he said.

"What I enjoy so much about the Star Trek books is the characters. One of my problems is inventing interesting characters. You're supplied with basic characters in Star Trek, and that makes it easier." He said he also tries to stay within the bounds of reality in the Star Trek books. "I make the science they use reasonable."

It takes DeWeese anywhere from several weeks to a year to write a book. He has a few proposals "floating around" at publishers, including a mystery in which he invested a lot of time.

He said there are so many things he wants to write, provided he can find the time. "I'd really like to get a straight science fiction collaboration sold. It has a lot of potential. The original version was sold to Laser in the 70s. They accepted it, but they folded," he said.

DeWeese also enjoys reading, though he admits he does not get to read as often as he'd like. He is currently cataloging his collection of books onto his computer. He said there are about 10,000 entries, including some valuable Lovecraft editions. In addition, his wife has a few thousand mysteries. "And then we've got magazines, anthologies, and other odds and ends. We have an eleven-room house, half of which is devoted to books."

And in the rest of his spare time? DeWeese said he watches too much television, including all of the Star Trek programs. ❑

The Living City

Continued from page 13

"Ilmater's priests don't maintain a shrine here. They have one in the city. There's usually one or two of them around, though. They consider it a holy spot, and pilgrims journey from far away just to see it. They say it has healing powers." The guide shrugs. "I've never been affected."

Indeed, as you look about, you note a pair of priests whose robes bear the sigil of the bloodstained rack.

If the PCs do a small favor for the approaching worshipers (bind their wounds, give them food or coins, etc.), the priests suggest that the PCs join Ilamater's faithful in a night-long vigil near the footprints.

If a devout follower of Ilmater sleeps overnight in the footprints, there is a possibility that the character will be cured of any infirmities (blindness, crippled limbs, broken bones), diseases and wounds. The chance for this is 20% plus 5% per level of the individual. If the character is a priest or paladin of Ilmater or has quested in his name, add another 10%. Add or subtract another 5%-20% if the character is in particularly good or bad standing with the deity. Also subtract 20% for each time the character has sought this particular boon in the past five years.

Sleeping within the footsteps will only cure physical ailments. Lycanthropy, which is as much a curse as a disease, is not affected.

Only worshipers of Ilmater can be cured in this manner. Any worshiper so cured will feel an urge to leave an offering of at least 100 gp worth of treasure (more if the infirmity cured was severe). If the character does not have that much wealth, he must leave half of all his money. Worshippers who leave no offering cannot sleep. After two days without sleep, the character suffers a +5 penalty to all ability and proficiency checks, a −25% penalty to all climbing and rogue skill rolls, and a −2 penalty to saving throws. Sleepless characters cannot regain spells. This effect persists until the character makes double the required donation at any temple or shrine dedicated to Ilmater.

Besides being a fun way to introduce PCs to the city, Traagor's Tours & Souvenir Shop can provide information about the city's history. It also gives young thieves a place to hide from the city's (or the PCs') wrath.

While you're there don't forget to pick up a few mementos for your family and retainers back on the fief. And not just a lousy tunic, okay?

❑

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THANK YOU! THANK YOU! AND WELCOME TO OUR SHOW! NOW SIR, COULD YOU TELL US YOUR NAME PLEASE?
UH...ERIC BLOODMOOSE...
MR BLOODMOOSE, YOU'VE BEEN CHOSEN FOR OUR SUPER SPECIAL BONUS ROUND! AND TONIGHT IT REALLY IS SUPER SPECIAL, ISN'T IT JONNY?

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